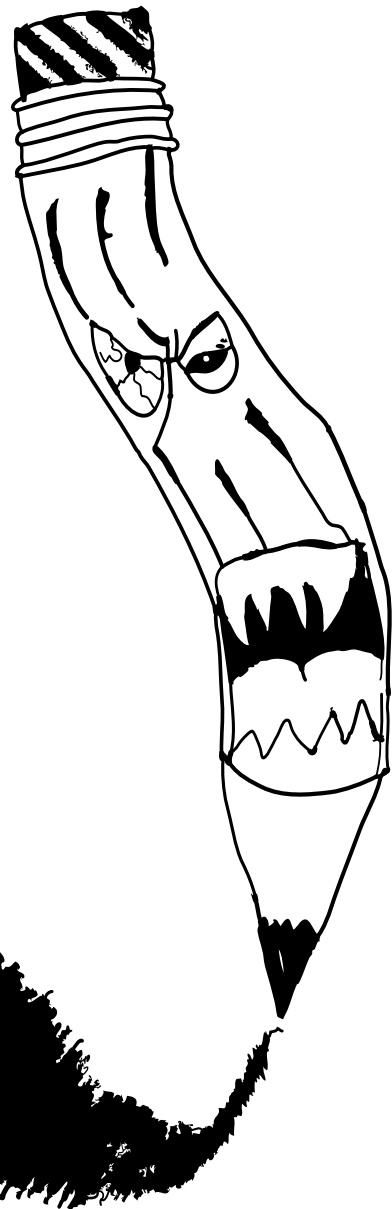


*It's time for me to change my life
around for the better.*

*I got a lil' man in this world and
I don't want him to take the path I
did. . .*

*It's time for me to give the game
a rest — I don't want to die and
leave my son on this earth not know-
ing who his father was or about, I
just don't' want him calling the next
ninja daddy.*

read the rest of Lil' Maine's POW on page 6



This morning we heard an amazing story from our long time friend and colleague Michael Kroll, and given only a couple of us were privileged to hear about Michael's weekend, we were thrilled to hear that he wrote it for this week's editor's note! We hope you too appreciate the following story...

As much as we know in our heads what a unique and incredible publication this is, there are times when even we are reminded through our hearts just what your words (because it's you who make it unique and incredible) can mean in the lives of others — and in our own lives.

This weekend, I had the indescribable pleasure of sitting down, face-to-face, with one of the most thoughtful, profound and talented writers ever featured in *The Beat Without*, that section in the back of the magazine whose writers we do not get to eyeball, but who send in their pieces from prisons and juvenile facilities from around the country. He told me this story as we sat in the visiting room of his current prison residence where he has only recently been transferred — a place where, for the first time in four years, he is able to touch and be touched by a visitor, where he can stand and walk around, where he can hug and kiss his mother, where he can feel some human connections to the outside world. Because he told me this story as friend to friend, I don't want to identify him by name. If he chooses, he can self-identify in some future piece in *The Beat*, of which we expect many. Suffice it to say that our meeting was, without question, the high point of a weekend filled with significant events.

When he wrote us for the first time, he was imprisoned in the distant dungeon called Pelican Bay, alone and isolated. He was nineteen years old, and had been locked up for almost three years at the time. He has just celebrated his 21st birthday. This is the story of how he discovered *The Beat Within*, and what it meant to him when he did.

Our young and gifted writer committed the crime of homicide. Without justifying that terrible act, there are many reasonable explanations for how this event came about. But to put it in a nutshell, his life had been threatened multiple times by this man who he found one day waiting from him in his own apartment, (which he maintained by working two jobs, even at that early age). Without waiting for this older man to act on his public threats, our teenage writer acted first. Panicked, he fled to a relative's home in another city where his mother tracked him down, telling him that the police wanted to talk to him. He knew why.

For the next 24 hours, frightened and confused, he wandered from small town to small town with his brother, and wondered what to do next. His family owned a place in Acapulco, Mexico, where he considered fleeing. But thinking about it, he concluded that such a flight would only be another kind of prison, a place of isolation where he knew no one and would be away from the family that he loved so much. Instead, he made the courageous, though very difficult, decision to return to his own town and turn himself in. Which he did. (He later pled guilty to 2nd degree murder, and was sentenced to 16 years to life in prison.)

They put him in juvenile hall (a place he had been only once before at age eleven for a fight), placing him in a suicide-watch cell, though he was not suicidal. He was supposed to be there for a matter of hours, but — because the psych. who was to observe and counsel him was not available — he spent the next three days there, mostly crying and playing the "Why me?" game over and over in his head. On the third day, however, he made a decision to stop crying, and to start facing the world that lay ahead, as honestly and as openly as he could. Three days — the same period of time between the crucifixion and the resurrection. As a symbol of this resurrected heart, this decision to begin a new life, he flipped his mattress. Underneath, he found a copy of *The Beat Within*...

He read it from cover to cover, and realized that there were many others who were living in the "why me" world, and who had found strength through the shared experiences

of others in similar situations. The strength that he took from what was published in that old issue of *The Beat* only added to the strength he already had within him — the same strength he had drawn on to turn himself in. This discovery of *The Beat* — whether by accident, by fate, or by Divine Direction — led him to write us for the first time, and that letter was so honest and decent, we responded with a personal letter of our own. And then this tremendously gifted writer began sending us pieces of prose and poetry of incredible depth and beauty. Another truly unique and incredible voice had now been added to all the other unique and incredible voices we have been publishing now for a dozen years. Your voices!

Meeting with this "friend" over the weekend (who I knew only through letters until now) was remarkable. It rekindled my own internal flame that often needs a faith-lift. It reminded me of the crucible that so many children are forced to accommodate in their lives without any choice in the matter, and of the human spirit that enables them to do it. It was one more example of the precious human resources we so casually cast under the vast national carpet that is our prison system. It was yet another example of the worth that each of you brings to make this the gem that it is, worth more than gold and silver.

Even as a published writer, I am unable to come up with words to describe how much this new friend means to me. *The Beat* was a lifeline that he did not know existed before he flipped that mattress — and flipped the script of his life — and now, as the ripples from a stone thrown into a pool extend endlessly, he has given me a gift of hope and of beauty in a world where ugliness is so easy to identify. As *The Beat* inspired him, so he has inspired me, and I will always be grateful to know him. And the beat goes on...

Incredible! We are so honored to have this story in *The Beat Within*. It belongs in our pages! The story belongs in our book! We have heard many incredible tales on how one stumbled upon *The Beat Within* publication over the years, and to be truthful this one is simply amazing. Thank you Michael for sharing this encounter with your friend, our friend, this past weekend.

Before we close this editor's note, allow us to inform you of the topics that were presented in the workshops prior to the writing in this 12.34 issue. The first topic, "Cheating, and getting away with it" — All of us have cheated and gotten away with it at some time in our lives. Maybe it was during a test in math; or maybe we cheated on a loved one we promised to be faithful to; or maybe it was towards our own mother by lying to her. Take us on a journey into the past when you got away with cheating and — until now — have never talked about it. But you also never forgot about it, so come clean, and tell all!

The second topic, "If He came back to Earth" — Most people believe in something or someone greater than themselves — the Creator, the All Powerful, the All Knowing God. What we want you to write about in this issue is what you imagine the Creator you believe in would do and/or say if He were to come back to Earth today. If your idea of the Lord — whether it's Jesus, or Allah, or Buddha — were to come back today in human form, what do you expect His message would be to the world... and to you?

Lastly, the very popular "I love you" — When is the last time you said, "I love you" to someone? Was it the romantic love between two lovers, or a child's love for his mother? Was it the Platonic love between friends, or some other form of love? So tell us when you last spoke those words. Who did you say them to? What were the circumstances that led up to you uttering those three simple, but powerful words: "I love you!" If you've never said those words, how come?

In closing, we send our respects to you readers of this editorial note, there isn't many of you who read the note, so we want to thank you. See you in the next issue!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Project What!!

The story that follows is an ongoing series from Bay Area youth sharing firsthand what it's like to have a parent in prison or jail. These young authors, all of whom participate in a program called Project WHAT!—We're Here and Talking, will continue to be featured in upcoming issues of The Beat Within. We hope you like what you have read thus far! The common thread tying together these authors' stories is that each of them has had a parent incarcerated. Not all of the youth focus directly on their parent's incarceration, but they write about their own struggles, successes, dreams, and goals. This week's story is by Kashka Washington. We hope the stories inspire you and give you insight into these young people's lives.

I am proud to be the Program Director of Project WHAT! As Program Director, I have the opportunity to work closely with the talented and courageous group of teenagers and young adults who make up our team. Project WHAT!

From The Beat: We are honored to have yet another feature piece of writing from the young writers over at Project What! We readers of The Beat Within want to thank you writers and your director, Anna Wong, for allowing The Beat Within's readership a glimpse into your world.

creates opportunities for the team to empower themselves and educate others by speaking out about parental incarceration.

Project WHAT! is a program of Community Works, a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley, California. For more information, and to access the resource guide, call us at (510) 486-2340 or go online to: www.community-works-ca.org/programs/projectwhat.html. If you're a young person who has a parent incarcerated and want a copy of our resource guide, we'll mail you a free copy. We hope you enjoy these stories.

— Anna Wong

Program and Policy Director, Project WHAT!

Trapped Until Further Notice

Balloons, cake and ice cream. Cookies and chips. Friends and family, laughing, playing, becoming a teenager. My mom and I always talked about how wonderful my thirteenth birthday party would be. But on the day I became a teenager I didn't get a party. Instead I got six packs of Now and Laters and a can of fifty-cent soda that I bought myself from the corner store. On my thirteenth birthday, my mom was in jail.

She left, went away, wasn't heard from, until I got the news. I thought, "Should I cry or just don't believe it?" I couldn't pretend she was on vacation because it wasn't true.

My brother and I had to move in with my Aunt Trinice, her husband, her three boys, and her only daughter.

"Welcome to your new home."

Um, hello, not exciting.

They were family, but they didn't feel like family. We had only met them two years before and didn't have a real relationship.

At my aunt's house nothing felt the same, nothing was the same. I was terrified, sad and lonely, like a puppy when it's storming out at night. In the dark I cried myself to sleep, hiding so nobody could see.

"I don't know these people," I told my mother over the thirty-minute phone call we got every blue moon.

"Don't cry, don't cry, don't cry," I told myself as I heard the precious voice I had longed to hear, when she got on the phone to say, "Hey Kash-ko." She always called me Kash-ko like the store, Costco. Before, it had irritated me, but now I suddenly found it endearing.

"Don't worry, everything will be okay, and I'll be home soon," she told me every phone call, and in each letter she wrote. Oh, how I worshipped those words.

Aunt Trinice's family favored my brother over me because he resembled my dad, my aunt's brother. "Awww, look at him, he looks just like Tauni," they'd say, gazing fondly at my brother, while ignoring me. I looked like my mom, and my aunt didn't like my mom. But my aunt showed the most favoritism towards her own children.

"Mama, can I have some money, to walk to the store?" my cousin Dehmi would ask.

"Go get my purse," my aunt would tell her.

I wanted to go to the store too. I jumped up to rush out of that preposterous house.

"Oh, I'm sorry Kashka, I don't have any more money," my aunt said unhesitatingly.

"Okay," I said, and sat back down. Every time I said

something, it felt like I messed up the whole moment, so eventually I just stopped speaking. I would go hide in my room, but then they would get mad at that. So I only spoke when spoken to.

School was no better. I used to love it. Shoot, to me growing up, school was my specialty. Almost a straight "A" student, except for bad citizenship sometimes. I used to love science projects and history projects. My mom and my brother always helped. Building missions and villages for the Native Americans in history class. Making paper mache face masks like the ancient Egyptians. Used to be fun working with our hands, getting down and dirty. It all changed when my mom left.

When I asked my aunt and her family for help on homework, they said, "Ask your teacher! I don't know how to do that!"

"But I'll fail," I said.

"I don't care, that's not my problem," the expression on my aunt's face told me.

I made friends, but my aunt's family disapproved of them. "Those 'friends' are not really your friends," they claimed. "They'll only cause trouble." But in my experience my friends were not trouble. They made it easier on me by taking my mind off my situation. For me the "trouble" came when I had to go home at the end of the day. Tried everything to stay away—extracurricular programs, going over to people's houses, helping teachers after school. But I always had to return to that torturous world.

Nobody cared except my grandparents. They always cared and were always there but my aunt kept me away. Told me they were busy or tired. Or, "They don't feel like being bothered with no snotty ass little evil bitch like you." Then she'd sigh and say, "I can't wait till your mother comes home," loud enough to make sure I heard it. This was one thing we agreed on. I couldn't wait for my mother to come home either.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, I waited for my mother to come home. "Save me from this madness," I chanted to myself.

Then the day finally came. I was sitting in the room I shared with my cousin, doing my chemistry homework. I was finally starting to get the hang of it. I heard the doorbell ring and went to answer it without any clue who it might be. I opened the door and there she stood, my mother, looking just like she had on the last day I had seen her. How I cried as I flew into her arms, not wanting to let go, as she whispered, "I told you I'd be home before you knew it."

- Kashka Washington, Project WHAT!

A Camcorder Reality

There's so much in my mind I think you would need about fifteen monitors to see it. You would see a lot of good but you would also see some bad. I wouldn't be JH if I were all good. You would see a lot of my girl and my son. You would see my family, also. You'd probably see how I became what I am today. I am in JH but I am a person who really wants to change his life. My son is the one who is really giving me the motivation to change. If I were not going to have a son in November, I would probably be thinking the same way.

On that monitor with my family I don't even know what I would see because it seems that no one in my family wants to change. My mom and brother are always in and out of jail getting new drug charges. My brother is always failing parole. That's probably what you would see on that screen. Most of the time, it's really a big blur. The screen that's clear is the one with my girl and my son. And that's the first screen you would see.

-Ian, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Well done Ian. We know what you mean about the many screens. Most of us have so much going on in our noggins, it might take more than 15 screens. And they'd all be lit up at the same time. The trick, some folks believe, is to focus on one 'screen' at a time, while remembering that the other ones are there. By centering our attention on the 'screen' that needs the most immediate attention, we are able to give more of ourselves to the people and situations that most need our attention. Thanks for your piece. Good health to your girl and your new baby, and to you.

Please Report Abuse

My story is to help those who have experienced any type of abuse. What I want to say is always tell someone about it. It may hurt now, but it will help. You may feel helpless, that it's your fault, and that it's not the right thing, but it is. I was sexually abused and I will tell you that I held it in for 6 years and it started affecting my life my relationships with people and peers. And it hurts worse to talk about it more now than what it would have been when it happened.

So if you're ever abused in any way, report it, it will help you feel better. It may not happen over night, but it will. Someone very smart told me and I quote, "You have to take it a little bit at a time because it may be a medium sized wound now, but it will get bigger if you don't deal with it." So report any abuse that happens to you.

-Been Abused, Maricopa County, Arizona

From the Beat: Very wise and brave advice to your peers. We are sure there is someone out there that will benefit from your willingness to stand up and be real. We also want to add that it is important to find the right person to tell...and if at first you are not believed or your story is discounted, find some one else willing to listen and direct you to the help you need to work through the healing process. May you find the courage to continue your healing journey and work beyond the pain that may, at times, be too hard to hold.

Wasted Talent

Every day we cheat ourselves by being here.

We are "wasted talent" but we are also cheated by the system because the only talent we know how to use ended us here. They cheated us by not helping us attain the things we need to succeed in the system that was created and run by people who have nothin' in common with the way we have come up, and the way we live.

-Lil' D, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece has 73 (we counted) of the sharpest, most clearly analyzed words we've had the honor of printing in the Beat. You managed to say in just a few sentences what experts all over American need whole books to say, and you say it better. Now here's our challenge to you: Knowing what you know, can you escape this problem and work your way out so YOUR talent won't be wasted?

Youngstas

Youngstas these days
Is all about getting paid but they
Going about it in
The wrong type of way.

The want money
But are impatient before they get it
But if you plan everything out it will come to you easy.

You may be doing
It ok that's good but it's something
Illegal and it
Takes its toll on your hood

'Cause now you
Hustling you think you got it good
But here come some
Boys from another turf and they came
To hit up your hood.

Now your lil' sis
Or patna got hit and the people
Who did it was
Wrong so now you mad and then
Begins the war

You call up your
Patnas, they shot my lil' ninja he died
Call up some
Favors it's time for us to ride.

You pull out your
Gun he pulled out his thang then a
Couple of blocks away
All you hear is bang bang.

It goes on for an
Hour until the police arrive they call
For twenty-plus body bags
Everybody died so now these bodies lay
Still over one life
And for what?

-Steven, Alameda

From The Beat: This isn't just the tragedy of gangs it's the tragedy of revenge and revenge warfare since the beginning of time. And from The Iliad on down, great poets have tried to show how deadly and wasteful that way of thinking. You are now stepping up to tell this tale, and one day you may join the ranks of those great poets.

Cheating

I believe it is true that all of us have cheated and gotten away with it at some time in our lives. My point of view on cheating is that winners never cheat and cheaters never win.

Sure even I have cheated before, when I was younger, however I learned in the end that winning something through cheating does not feel half as rewarding as winning honestly does. For me giving it my best try makes me feel good in the end even if I loose, but if I win it feels even better. Like when you go fishing and eat the fish you catch, it seems to taste better then when you buy it from the store.

-Chris, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a mature take on winning and loosing. Many of us are too immature to really value honest winning. To value honest winning is to value ourselves and our future. When we get in the habit of cheating, we devalue our lives and get use to it, and a beautiful future is put on hold.

Windows To The Soul

First I want to say that I'm sorry the death of Allan's father. May your father Rest In Peace...

What's in a look...the look that people get when they are dying. The eyes are the windows to the soul, but what happens to the soul when someone dies? Does it stay trapped within those windows or is it set free? A look tells a lot. It can tell if someone is sad or happy. It can tell if someone is lying or telling the truth.

When somebody is dying, whether it's your homie, your father, or any random person. When you look in their eyes, you feel sadness, but what does the person feel. You look in their eyes... some say they died peacefully and others say it was a hard death.

When you really take the time to look into a person's eyes. You see more than you ever thought you would see. It's like you just took a quick trip through their lives.

The look in their eyes is the window to their soul....

-Eric "Slick", Alameda

From The Beat: This terrific piece - which is sort of like a window to your own soul - is so on. If we would all just take a minute to stop and look in our enemies' eyes, for example, and see the hurt and history and hopes inside those eyes, it might end all the wars, both on the streets and in the fields!

I just want to see my son be himself, not somebody he's not.

About My Son And Me

It's time for me to change my life around for the better.

I got a lil' man in this world and I don't want him to take the path I did. I want him to stay in school, I don't want him in the street selling drugs to get money.

I want him to do it the right way, so that's why man I got to give him the love he need. I want him to walk around and not have to look over his shoulder making sho' he don't get popped.

I just want him to have mom and dad there to support him I don't want him thinking I'm dead. I want to have a "Father and Son Day" where we can just spend time together one on one.

I just want to see my son be himself, not somebody he's not.

I want him to have all the good things in life.

It's time for me to give the game a rest -- I don't want to die and leave my son on this earth not knowing who his father was or about I just don't want him calling the next ninja daddy. That's all that's putting fear in me. It's bad that he got to see his father in jail. It's good he's only 12 months and he don't know about jail. I just want to keep it that way. The last thing I want to say is I love my son and I'm going to change my life around for my son.

-Lil' Maine, Alameda

From The Beat: This may be the most important piece you ever write, especially if you treat it like a vow that you have made to yourself, one you pledge to keep, no matter what. The question is, what do you need to do to make this happen? You need support - the positive members of your family, a group, a program, help getting a job and applying for school so you can continue to grow and show him that a person can do anything they put their mind to. Tell us next week how you plan to get the support you need to make this piece reality.

This is My Life

Living this life of crime

While nowadays ninjas quick to drop a dime
They hated when they see another ninja shine
Now the system is trying to give me some hard time

Thinking of this makes my stomach hurt
Thinking of what another person's life is worth
Nothing 'cause am riding around putting in work
Busting shots leave a ninja dead in the dirt

Out here in the town this is our lifestyle
Hard times every day but I still crack a smile

All this killing been here for a while
Wishing I could go back to when I was a child

All these obstacles I had to face
Sixteen years old fighting a triple shooting case

This is the present

Wishing I could go back to the old days

While haters trying to take my life

I am here to stay

But knowing soon I'll soon be with my dead patnas
in that better place

It seems like my life turned into a tragedy
A ninja was getting money so my own patnas got mad at me

So I say forget friends, they want to pretend

So you know how that be

When you broke they act cranky

So you wonder why I am cranky

And stay with a attitude

I am mad at the world ninja, I ain't just mad at ypu.

-Quintor The Baby G, Alameda

From The Beat: You wrapped up the last lines of this smart and insightful poem like a Shakespearean sonnet, and when you lay it out like that... you have got good reasons to be "mad at the world". But does being mad help you? Does it help you motivate to change, does it help you motivate to prove ALL the haters wrong about how you are and whether you can make it?

My Brother's Death

July 2, 2004, my brother's life was taken when my house caught fire. My mom was a crystal meth addict and when she tweaked she would light candles, and one day she lit one and fell asleep. I'm not sure how, but the candle fell over and started the house on fire.

Everyone was asleep, except my other little brother Rayvon. He was watching Saturday morning cartoons and eating a big bowl of Fruit Loops. And all of a sudden, he smelled the smoke and went to the bedroom. He saw the flames and ran to get my grandma because he didn't know where my mom was. She was back inside the flaming room with my two baby brothers.

She didn't know that my three year old brother was on top of my bunk bed, so she grabbed my one year old brother, shattered the window and jumped out. That was when my brother died.

My mom went to prison for two years, and me and my brothers went into social services. And now I live with my grandma. Everyday I think if I was just there, I could have saved him.

-Anthony, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Anthony, this is the saddest piece. We know it must have been difficult to write. But we're glad you did. It helps to tell hard stories. We humans need to share things like this. You weren't there, so we can see how you think you might have saved your brother. But it really was not your fault. It was a tragedy, a terrible tragedy, but you were not to blame. Your job is to get yourself together so you can be helpful to your brothers who survived. And to your whole family. This is not an easy situation. But you must be strong, do the right thing, and get back home where you can be of service. Thank you very much for sharing this with us.

Bruised And Battered

I am bruised and battered
I wonder if anybody thinks of me and if they do, do they miss me
I hear the sound of shattered cries
I see distorted images of hollowed out bodies
I want love and passion
I am bruised and battered
I pretend I'm not here
I feel the loneliness in the air
I touch black disintegrating hearts
I worry about the demands in my brain
I cry over pain that sticks through my body like a thousand knives
I am bruised and battered
I understand the world shouts and cries
I say "it's going to be okay"
I dream of an easier way
I try to deal with those uneasy ways
I hope something makes them all go away
I am bruised and battered

-Genelle, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Great form - starting every line with "I" makes your poem very powerful. It's understandable that you hope something will come to take away the pain you're experiencing. Remember that you can try to take the intelligence you have and the talent you've been given to create something beautiful out of the pain that you've experienced and come up with a plan to get the life you want. You have a lot to share, Genelle, and we hope you keep writing.

I Love You

The words "I Love You" are very emotional and meaningful words. The last time I said those words to someone and actually meant it was when I told my grandma that I love her.

The day that I told her I love her was the day I got detained after court, and got sentenced to the ranch. Real talk when I told I lover her, that was probably the only time I felt sad and pissed off at the same time when I used those words because I thought I would never be able to see my grandma for a long time.

My grandma raised me since I was a baby. To me she is my mom, dad, and grandma. She showed me everything I need to know, and I thank her for that. I don't know what I would do without her. I love you grandma.

-Arty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The love between a man and his grandmother is beautiful. Certainly she has sacrificed for you, as good moms/dads/grandmas should do. When do you think you will get a chance to start sacrificing for her?

No More

Alcohol, violence, abuse soon came.
I survived my time. I suffered my pain
afraid in the dark, alone in the night.
The peace that I wanted
was nowhere in sight.
Then one day there was no one near.
I ran upstairs with so much fear.
I heard the footsteps sound so close.
I smelled the alcohol.
I knew who it was.
He came in, slammed the door.
I woke up and said "No more".

-Sabina, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is well done and terrifying - a big story in a small poem. It takes a lot of courage to say "No". And it takes a different kind of courage, sometimes, to ask for help. We hope you also have that kind of courage.

Cheated

Well, there are a lot of things I haven't been caught for, but the main things are cheating on my girlfriend.

The reason it bugs me so much is that I would nag her if she even talked to other people. But behind her back I would go out with my friends, mess around with other girls, and then tell her I was with my mother. Then, when she found out I was cheating on her, she retaliated and cheated back. And I would make her feel hell a bad and tell her I couldn't trust her. And at the same time, I was still cheating on her.

To this day she doesn't know half the girls I cheated with, and she even knows one of them. What I'm saying is that I've cheated and that I'm sorry with all my heart.

Even though you cheat, and get away with it, it always comes out. And it will haunt you for a long time, especially when you cheat on the one you love. So, to my girl, I'm sorry.

-V, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That's quite a confession. And we believe you, about being sorry. We'd like to know why you believe you've put this behavior behind you. Why, if the opportunity arose, would you not cheat again?

Learn From My Past

Today is filled with anger, fueled with hidden hate
scared of being outcast, afraid of common fate
today is built on tragedies which no one wants to face
nightmares to humanity and morally disgraced
tonight is filled with rage, violence in the air
children bred with ruthlessness cause no one at home cares

tonight I lay my head down but the pressure never stops
knowing that my sanity content when I'm dropped
but tomorrow I see change and a chance to build anew
build on spirit, intent of heart, and ideas based on truth
tomorrow I wake with second wind and strong because of pride

I knew I fought with all my heart to keep the dream alive.

- Chino, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for inspiring us through the poetic beauty and potential of today, tonight, tomorrow... you lead us on a journey from fear to hope.

Lil' One

I miss you a lot, now that I'm in hear and not able to see you or hold you. You are too little to understand what is going on around you, and I know you will grow up going through your own experiences. And that is what I fear.

You are only four months and you are growing up so fast. I miss kissing your chubby cheeks and your little cute feet. I miss that little giggle you would burst out when I would kiss you. I miss your little hands. I miss watching you in your sleep. You looked so cute and so peaceful. Most of all I miss the sparkle in your eyes when you would smile.

When I'm in my bad moods I just come in the house and look at you. All of the angry and sad feelings go away instantly, as I hold you and make you laugh. I hope I get released on the 29th so I can finally hold you in my arms. I love you baby sister.

- Cynthia, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Lovely Cynthia. We hope you get released, too. Most of all, we hope you've come to grips with what landed you in the hall. You can't take good care of your sister if you don't take good care of yourself.

Mystic Statistic

I'm tryin' to set somewhere past the time
But not for a slave deal, a whip and a chain
So many thoughts bouncing off of my brain
Lookin' at these four walls got me goin' insane
All I feel is pain and this misfortune
Not even a fortune cookie could bring me good fortune
Feeling like a test that I'm destined to fail.
Feel like no one loves me least I can't tell
Not even thinking 'bout heaven, I know I'm going to hell,
Me and evil working' out, plannin' my cell
I already tried climbin' to the top
But I failed like –
so many others I'm just a
statistic
but far from dumb I'm more like a mystic.
(to be continued)

-Jesus, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem is to be continued, just like your life, and we're dying of curiosity to see what happens next. Especially because we want to know what the "mystic" you has to put down in your next poem. Waiting on Part 2!

What Would You Do? (Part 1)

Well, I hope this reaches all Beat readers with much love and respect. But anyways well as for the topic, I think everybody is on this earth for a reason and everybody has a purpose. It seems like the world is changing everyday and the people that are involved with gang banging and drugs ain't moving with it because of similar problems mentioned in the article, such as ending up in jails or cemeteries.

What I think is if people were offered more programs and job training the recidivism rate will fall, because instead of people out there gang banging they would be at work trying to survive in the real world not no fantasy land. Instead of trying to make money the wrong way they could get the chance to make it the right way.

Many people take drug dealing and gang banging and drug dealing very serious because that's all they know. But if there were more programs that could show them that there is a world beyond that with a lot more opportunities I think this problem will be solved.

Well that's all the time I got right now so stay up and be coo' to all The Beat readers.

'Till pencil meets paper...

-Unloved, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Many people remain unsuccessful in life partly because they do not know anyone who is successful; people don't know how to be successful. Your idea about programs is a great one—please get out of the hall and start helping address the problems you see so clearly.

Seen A Lot Go Down In My 'Hood

My life is run with hustlas, drugs, gang violence and females who sell their bodies. The life I was born in. I was born in General Hospital on June 7, 1990. Lived an' raised in Hunter's Point. Seen a lot of people get shot, shot at, beat down by the police. Cousins of mine got killed by drive-bys in the 'hood.

Uncles go to prison, close friends in the pen for life of murder, and grandparents died over heart attacks, and where we live at with all the pollution in Hunter's Point.

-Bryant, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's messed up that you are born into an environment you have no control over, and that while the government does nothing to make those conditions better, it still holds you responsible for whatever you do to adapt. It's unfair, but unfortunately, it's what is. So, we hope you're able to find a way to move on up and overcome these harsh realities so that you can enjoy freedom and life.

Being Drunk

Aye, what up Beat? It yo' boy Evek from the max. Well, I'ma write a little about this topic. Well, this one time when I was at my boy's house just chillin' havin' a little get together, drinkin' ands stuff, just havin' fun. Well, I got so drunk that night I took 12 double shots of E&J (brandy).

Well, after me being so stupid and fallin' on my ass, knockin' people down and just enjoyin' the night, after at about two o'clock a.m. when my boy's mom was goin' to come home from her job, we left my boy's house. We went walkin' to Lincoln High to go chill there. I remember I had a pack of some stogies, and by the end of the night I only had two and I didn't smoke any, so I was like, "Damn."

As we were walkin' to the school, my friends went ahead of me so I stayed with my lady. When we got into the school, my girl said that I was talkin' to a bush, and she told me that I was talkin' to it like it was one of my boys. She told me to call my brother 'cause I was too drunk to do anything. So I told my brother where I was, and he said he would come and pick me up...

But what I didn't know was that my sister was coming to in her car and my sister never seen me drunk before. So when I got in the car, she started yelling at me non-stop about walking around and being drunk. As she was yelling at me, I got my two cents and said, "I am not drunk! I don't know what you're talkin' about..."

So she told me she wanted to take me to get some food. I told her I wasn't hungry. She took me to McDonald's anyway. I ordered hella food. On the ride back I was texting my lady even though she was right next to me. So as I was yelling at her through texting, she started to get mad at me. But hey, I was messed up.

As we pulled in the driveway — my sister's car is hella loud for some reason — my mom came downstairs in the house. As I got to the garage door, I slammed my whole face and body into the door and my mom came outside to see what happened. My brother unlocked the door and pushed me in and I almost fell. That whole time I was in the dark laughing hella hard because I was hiding from my mom. Well, after about an hour of just talkin', I passed out...

Well Beat, that was just one night and there are many more. Well Beat, I still here just getting tired and more tired of this hellhole. Well Beat, it's not good but it's been eight months now...Well Beat that's it for today, and to the boys in here stay up.

-Evek, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a co-pow not because we think what you did was so funny, but because you wrote it so well, giving us many details. But you ignored the dangers in such behavior. You fell on your face; you talked to a bush; you texted the girl sitting right next to you; you slammed your face into the door! In other words, you were totally out of your mind, which can lead to all sorts of negative (and possibly deadly) outcomes. If this were just a one-time event, we wouldn't be so concerned, but when you wrote, "that was just one night..." we get the picture that this is repeated behavior. Were you drunk when you did whatever it was that led you to this "hell hole" that you're so tired of? We think that connecting the dots would be a sign of maturity...

I Love You

The last time I spoke those words, "I Love you," was last night. I tell my spouse I love you right when it's time to end my phone call. What led me to say those words is how she been there for me and held me down, ya heard.

I tell my moms I love her too, but that's a different love. I also tell my thugs I love them and that's also another love, a love for a friend. But not everyone can get love from the Ryhda.

-JR F Ryhda, San Francisco

From the Beat: We like the fact that you broke down three different kinds of love in this short piece. If everyone could get love from the Ryhda, then none of it would mean much, would it?

Bro-Love

A brother's love is so tight
 It would make a person fight for his life
 A bond so close it would make you choke
 A love so strong you can't stop holdin' on
 My brother's love is all I got
 Always on my side ready to ride, do or die
 Loyalty and respect is what keeps us so close
 I can always depend on my brother
 'Cause he rides with me through good and bad weather
 I can go to hell and my brother would be right there by
 my side
 Going through the deepest fire
 To have my brother stay eternal would be my deepest
 desire
 I shed blood not tears when my brother is not near
 But I can only hope and pray that can reunite one day
 An ride till the sun goes down an' the moon comes out
 My brother's love is so strong you can't help but hold on
 Till death do us part, that's the love in my heart

-Lil' C, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are lucky to have this powerful love that binds you together, and we admire how passionately you've written about it. But think deeply about how you both live your lives, because you are risking the thing you love the most if you're always "ready to ride." What if something terrible were to happen to him but not to you? How would you deal with it? We wish you could each be the reason the other finds a way to live in freedom and peace.

If Love So Nice...

(Chorus)

If love so nice
 Can you tell me why it hurt so bad?
 If love (love)

So nice can you tell me why I'm sad?
 (Verse 1)

Baby girl, we used to have fun love makin'
 But you done broken my heart
 You took my trust for granted, girl,
 And you done torn it apart

I ain't been nothing but faithful to you baby girl
 From the start

So why you gotta go and do an USO wrong
 And treat me this way

Sweet memories of you and me girl is fading away
 My love for you was strong, but now it starts to decay

(Chorus)

(Verse 2)

Damn, baby girl, was up? What it do?
 Well, I was just thinking and wishing I never met you
 And the reason for that is 'cause you cheated on me
 And took a part of me that never left you
 And the piece you took was a piece of my heart
 You done ripped it out and bit it out like a shark

Aww damn, baby

Why you gotta do me like that?

Now it's hard for me to trust another female
 And that there's a fact

And now I go around, mess around, doing it with many
 women

Oh snap! I gotta go see you later all you pigeons
 This rap is fiction

(Chorus)

-Tiny Samoa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Is any of this "fiction" based on fact?/Either way, it's a pretty good rap/One thing, though, we know for sure/Even though love hurts, there's really no cure.

Nothing's Silenced

Listen up to some serious talk
 As I contemplate to educate anther just like 2Pac
 This political world is so unjust
 But we do nothing to help but we must
 Keep ourselves open minded to everything surrounding
 our midst
 People keep following the one with wits
 So I stand laced with the game schooling own the kids
 With no shame to pimp boos for fits
 Stacking grips
 While flippin' scripts
 And transforming bricks to chips
 Person to person
 Situations constantly worsen
 Words turn to actions while people get hurt and get
 stuck in a hearse
 Fall off the map just like that
 Over bullshhh you'll get snapped
 It's a wrap
 But you've got a choice
 If you're smart use your voice
 To speak and rejoice against a senseless life
 I live for the hood but I've seen no light
 It's common sense to exist for a price
 Giving up the senseless violence counts as sacrifice
 But my heart stays frozen like a chunk of ice
 My mind and mentality mature like the seasons
 Which is why I steer clear of excuses instead I give
 reasons

But quitting your team is known as treason
 Disloyalty can get you dismembered at any given time
 So take heed to my cautions that I project in this rhyme
 Because if you fail to detect them you might catch that
 time

No I'm not your chain

You can gang bang and sit and use your brain
 It doesn't mean you have to drive yourself insane
 By flossin' colors and selling cane
 Watching over your shoulder making sure you don't get
 pinched in the game

To all my thugs, hustlers, and gangstas
 Obtain a higher education by earning your master's
 Get all the dough you once chased blind
 Because this here is the legal grind

Instead of worrying on how you'll cop' ya dubs
 Imagine doing what you like with paycheck stubs
 I ain't trying to preach I'm trying to teach

The word of real

I like my cribs wooden doors not bars of steel
 Screw county trays

I love a home cooked meal

No I'm not a punk so don't get confused
 I stay loyal to the game and all its rules
 Rivals are no match but a sideline distraction

One that keeps us in statistics fraction
 That labels us as monsters and criminals
 And if we continue the consequences are far from
 minimal

Our freedom we take for granted is beyond phenomenal
 Soldiers that stay royal
 Respect and power richer than oil
 But dishonor lies all upon our soil
 Please educate yourselves before your mind start to
 spoil

-Educated Gangster, Santa Clara

From The Beat: When gang bangers do what they do, they actually play into the game that others set-up. Gang bangers actually have no freedom because they just become statistics (either incarcerated or in cemeteries). To actually fight against society requires becoming something different from what the society tries to make you into. It is easy to fail in life, it is hard to rise above all! Best wishes on your journey to fight against our society; you can make it happen.

Living In hell

Where I come from is like living in hell
 Make the wrong choice be sleepin' in a jail cell
 Can't wait to plead, can't wait for trial
 Don't get released, be going buck wild
 PO ain't on your side, attorney fakin'
 Just thinkin' 'bout the money they makin'
 Get released back on the streets
 To drugs, violence, and the beef
 Can I stay out the system
 Is what you be wishin'

-Jay G, San Francisco

From the Beat: You've done a great job of putting your thoughts into a tight poem. But what is the difference between the PO and attorney thinking about their money, and you thinking about your money? More important, whether they are on your side or not, are you on your side? We hope you find a way to stay clear of the "drugs, violence and the beef" when you're back in their midst, or you'll be giving up even more of your precious freedom to the cold system!

I Love You

I can't remember the last time I told my dad "I love you."
 I just remember him being mad at me, and then I got locked up. I was locked up when he died. I tried to see him and go to his funeral but I was never able to see him. I can't remember when I told him "I love you."

- Lil' Man, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Some times saying three simple words can be one of the hardest things to do, but they are three words that should be spoken often. Every child, teen and adult need to hear the words, "I Love you" it lets us know that some one cares for us. Remember if and when you become a parent to always "I Love you" on a daily basis to your child, it makes a difference.

"I Love You" Will Do

The last time I said I love you to someone was today. I called my lady to let her know that I love her, and to say happy birthday. Those three little words are powerful. Every time that I say them to somebody, I put a lot of thought and feel to them. So next time that you hear those words, don't take them lightly.

Until I find a different way to express my feelings, "I love you" will have to do. Until next time, Beat.

-Chico

From The Beat: What we like most about this piece is that you think about those words and the power they have before you express them. That gives them a strength not everyone conveys when they say "I love you."

New Lifestyle

When I get out, I'm going to a group home. Well, it's not really a group home, it's a program. I call it a new lifestyle because I'm going to a county I know nothing about. I don't know anybody over there and I'm gonna have to do things I don't usually do, or I'm gonna come back here. I can't smoke no weed; I can't chill wit' the homies; I can't be wit' my girl, 'cause I'm gonna be at the program for a year.

But, damn, I don't know why the hell I'm whinin', 'cause I got myself in this shhh. I ain't worried about it, 'cause I'm just gonna get the program over wit' and be home in no time, but I damn sure ain't comin' back to this place.

-GB, San Francisco

From The Beat: We always believe that the most important ingredient for the success of any program is the attitude you bring to it, and it seems like you have a very good attitude. Make the most of the year ahead. Learn what you can so you are a bigger and better person when you return. And good luck.

Learning From Life's Mistakes

I do what I do because I grew up without a fatherly figure that could be there for me. I also think that my parents don't really understand me and can't relate to what I have been through.

I do sometimes feel helpless when I am in here because I'm not able to spend time with my family or do regular activities like going to school or hanging out with my friends or my boyfriend.

I used to get angry a lot because my mom always thought she knew everything about me when actually she didn't know that much about me like she thought she did.

When I'm in my room that's when I start thinking about stuff I have done in the past. Actually, I'm glad I'm in here so it can teach me a lesson. I believe stuff happens for a reason. I talk to my favorite staff when I'm feeling sad because she helps me feel "normal" again. I just think about the positives of being here like at least I'm not dead and I eat. I'm not abandoned in the cold dark somewhere.

My personal concern is returning safe to my family and learning from this mistake and hopefully never coming back. I just want to get my life back on track.

-Ariana, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: There is a saying "Repeating the same actions again and again and expecting different results is the definition of insanity." So what have you learned from the mistakes you have made, Ariana, and what will you do different, so that you can get your life on track? The words inside are always sincere, but the actions when out say so much more. What will you do when out?

It's Time

I'm sick of being the one who runs
 From the things that I care and love
 I am the friend, brother and son
 Who's young, dumb, and full of some...
 But from real talk
 I'm tired of looking over my shoulder
 I'm tired of running
 And not planning for a future
 But now it's time to change my life
 And also my mind
 To face my fears
 And shoot for my dream
 But it's time, it's time

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though we had to change one word (you little devil), we really like the point you are making with this poem. Whatever your fears (and we all have them), turning to face them will remove a great weight from your shoulders, and let you walk forward. Keep walking!

I Love You, Little Brother

The last person I said I love you to was to my little brother. It breaks my heart every time when he say's it back because I know it hurts him twice as much as it hurts me. So now I'm thinking, "What is my little brother going to think of me now?"

Before all this happen, he always used to look up to me. But now I don't know what he think of me now. That was the last person I said I love you to.

-New Booty, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We really like this piece because it reminds us again that when we act without thinking, it can affect a lot of people we love and care about. We don't know how this will affect what your little brother thinks of you, but we know that you can win back is love and that adoring look in his eye by making sure you never let the system take you from him again. And the way to do that is not to break the law.

Be Successful!

Think,
 Plan,
 Envision,
 Dream,
 Manifest,
 Succeed.
 Conquer,
 Develop,
 Power brings peace,
 Ignorance is a prison
 Those things are real to me.
 And I know that with a
 dream and a vision and an
 opportunity-anything is possible

-Jacory, Alameda

From The Beat: These are words to believe in and hold on to. So what is the opportunity you are waiting for, and how will you take advantage of it.

This Pain

Everyday being behind locked doors
 Makes you feel so much more
 Watching mommy at court crying
 Drenched in her tears
 While she's standing there hoping you don't get locked
 up for years
 All she hears towards the end
 Are the words 'hold'
 You go back to the unit
 Not feeling so well
 Right deep in your heart
 You wish you and her were never apart
 Crying just as she was
 In your freezing cell
 All you can do is hope she'll accept your call
 And hope at your next court date all will be well

- Kaelyncia, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's a horrible feeling to see your mother crying for something that 'we' had done. Remember these feelings and make the right choice, so you don't have to go back into that freezing cell again. Remember four simple words, 'is it worth it?'

I Love You

The last time I said, "I love you" was to my mom. What made me say that is because the conversation we were having. My mom is the most strongest, powerfulest woman in the world. She always there for me when I need her, no matter if I'm right or wrong.

The other people I say, "I love you" to is my wife and my ninjas. My wife is the second most strongest, powerfulest person in the world. She really is a down ass female. She hold a ninja down, fa real. I bet ninjas wish they had a female like mines.

I love my ninjas because they always there for me. They understand the struggle I'm going through. The homies are my family. Can't nobody rock like my thugs rock. Some people think that love is just three simple words, but it ain't. "I love you" is a very powerful word. If you never told somebody you love them, then something is wrong with you. Words are gettin' short. If any of the homies reading this, I want to say, "I love you" and stay strong. We all we got.

-Michael

From The Beat: You're always very affectionate and you often tell your homies that you love them and hug them. They understand how you mean it, hug you back, and tell you they love you, too.

Second Chance

The Hall is a second chance
 But most of us don't take a stand and realize that you
 Can be a better man

Get a job with health benefits
 Not one that puts your health at risk
 Because there's no excuse
 For you not to put your brain to use.

You say forget the police but your doing their job
 By shooting each
 Other and sellin' the substance
 That puts you behind bars

Just take the chance
 To realize that all the potential
 You have gives you the chance to do
 Something with your life

I'm killin' 'em

I'm killin' 'em -but with my words
 Because I'm proving that
 Black people can live above

Above the stereotype expectations
 That the first-class citizens
 Have branded in the Hispanic
 And Black nation

They use prisons
 And juvenile halls so they
 Can break
 Our spirits and watch
 As we fall

They don't want
 Us to realize what we're doing
 To each other be
 'Cause when we kill each other
 Eliminating the problem

-Esteven, Alameda

From The Beat: Your words are nothing but wisdom and the truth. The system used many ways to trap us into the pitfalls they have set in front of us, but as a great mind, you have to be a leader and make a change. Change starts somewhere, why don't you let it be you?

The Truth On Gangs

People grow up wanting to be in gangs.
 Because they think it cool.
 To tell the truth, gangs are hard to be in.
 You have to take orders, told what to do by older heads.
 All gangs lead to is prison or dead,
 6 feet in the ground.
 Some people don't care.
 Some people want to go to prison.
 Some people's families choose for them to bang, they
 grow up in it.
 Just think about the future and and what you want for
 you and your family.
 Are you willing to sacrifice your life for a gang
 that was here before, during, and after you leave this
 earth
 is it worth your life?

- Convict, Alameda

Form The Beat: Deep. We know you speak from experience. We so appreciate you stepping up and playing a role as a teacher. Keep talking young man, we're listening and so are hundreds of other readers!

All This Madness Need To Stop

Hi, my name is Banana, coming out of Unit 5. Well, if you know me, today is my cousin' Day of the Dead. I miss him so much. I hate it when I hear someone die in my fam die. I hate this turf shhh. All this madness need to stop. I can't do dis no more. I wish I can stop this killing, like over colors.

To all the blue, are you going to suck all the blood out of yo' flu? And to all the red, remember the sky is blue. Are you going to kill the sky? Well, I have to go.

-Banana, San Francisco

From The Beat: We agree that wars over parts of towns that nobody owns and colors that everybody owns are childish — deadly games in the hands of children. These children were told the game before they even had a chance to think and, for a tragic number, they'll never grow up to see things for what they really are. We too wish we could stop this stupid killing, and we admire you for wanting to. But all you can do is not be a part of it, to rise above it, and to see it for the stupidity that it is.

My First and Only Love

What's good? Well, let me tell you about my first love.

We met six years ago when I was nine years old and we been together for five years. We had good and bad times.

We have a month-old daughter, but when I first came here it was hard for me to say bye to him. When he was young, I remember when he told me that he loved me. At first, I didn't believe him but he showed me. I wasn't sure what love was until he showed me. And he always kept a smile on my face. He's been there for me through thick and thin.

Even though our trust isn't all there like it used to be when we was younger, but it's getting there. And it's so cute when he holds his daughter and says: "This is the bestest thing that ever happen to me." And he always has a sparkle in his eyes. I been in love so long I can't let it go. It's hard. I love you Lil' Boo! 'Til death do us part.

-Young Dae Dae, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, having a daughter with someone you have known from such a young age is so powerful. Then when your daughter grows up you can tell them what her father was like as a young person. It seems like you two have some things to work out but a lot to be together for.

Down Falls About Dreadheads

Man, everybody act like dreadheads is the stuff. But what you don't know is that them are the main people going to jail. Guess why a lot of them do? Mistaken identity, 'cause everybody look the same. Now ain't that a cold game?

I know from experience, which turned my life and opinion around. And made me want to change my mentality around so I chopped my stuff and decided to settle down. Actually, when people see somebody with dreads they're either, like "he a drug dealer", or "he's one of the boys that's always getting into trouble", which they call "hyphy". Now, that's a strong word because if the wrong person hear somebody say that like a gang banger, and what if he like, "o foshio, u sure, let's see about that." And within a wink of an eye you got a big barrel in ya face, and somebody you never saw in yo life asking where you from.

I ain't sayin' it happen to everybody with dreads, but it happens a lot. Also the police always stopping you and harassing you for no reason, and the next thing you know, you in jail. So if you got dreads, make sure you doing the right thing. I'm talking 'bout positive stuff.

- K-Mack, Alameda

From the Beat: Thank you for this excellent piece of reporting. And your fellow Beat readers with dreads will appreciate the good advice! Keep it coming.

Wake Up!

Get a clue and expand your view
Open up your horizons and start getting open minded
Two different people's opinions can be two different truths

Get real with yourself and find out which rings true for you

The truth for me is drugs, sex and violence
Stuck in a world that's so distant and divided
How people are ignorant and criticize this way of life
How for me it's a daily routine a struggle and fight
How people don't know what's really going on
How in reality everything ties all into one

How they replace one another
First comes sex, then violence, then drugs to cope

I like drugs

Sometimes violence

And sex with my significant other

That's just the remedy that keeps me from going under

Violence over drugs, dope deals, sex to get dope

AIDS from having unsafe sex from being high

I know it's messed up but we all live a crooked life

So what's the difference between you and I

Everybody thrives off one

Sex drugs or violence

-Genelle, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What does it mean that 'drugs, sex and violence' are the "truth" for you? The world may be 'distant and divided' but you can still rise above what you see and make changes in your life to live differently. You say that the mix of sex, drugs and violence keeps you from going under, but it sounds like it's doing the opposite and dragging you down into a life that you recognize will be one filled with pain. Just as you ask the reader to expand their horizons. We challenge you to do the same thing. There are other options available to you if you're willing to do the work to break out of a cycle that you know will only lead you down one path.

My Cheating Story

I remember back in November '06. I was working hard and doing the right thing going to school taking care of my baby mama. Everything was going my way, everything. It was the best point in my life.

Then I decided to mess it all up... some girl I was working with was all over me. I couldn't help but get at her, she was cute, getting' money even though my baby's mama got shit goin' on, I just let my head get to me, my mind was playin' tricks on me. I ran a lil' game on her, acted like I cared what she had to say, then she got attached to me, she even know I had a baby mama.

I didn't think I was that slick, but then my baby mama would come to work and see us together; there was no hiding it. I just stopped caring. I was heartless. I started sleeping with the girl while my lady was pregnant.

I eventually broke it off with her when my son was born. But now being locked up I realize how messed up I was to my girl, and she still stood by me, loving me, having all this time to think about it gets to me, because I stepped all over my baby mama, but she still was feeling me. I guess the moral of my story is think before you do shhh, 'cause I will always come back to you. Respect your loved ones. I learned from it and it will never happen again. I love you Brianna, always always. Well thanks for having faith in me and believing me.

I'm sorry.

-Kev, Alameda

From The Beat: The most amazing thing about this story is how well you told it, showing us all the different sides of how you got tempted into this situation, and how you grew from it and what you learned. Do you think that it will happen again that you might get tempted by another girl? And will this experience change how you react?

Invisible

I wish I can be invisible 'cause I'm ashamed that I put my family through a lot and they still on my side.
 I wish I can be invisible 'cause I'm still struggling tryna make a dollar out of a quarter.
 I wish I was invisible 'cause I don't got what I the kids have who go things for they B-day -- new school clothes and money in they pocket.
 I wish I was invisible 'cause everybody judge, 'cause you're not like them --you have yo' own mind.
 I wish I was invisible 'cause my pain in my heart won't go away 'cause I lost love ones that I cared about.
 I wish I was invisible so I can sit on a corner and cry out all my feelings but I don't cry 'cause my spirit not broken...
 I wish I was invisible so I can stop all the pain of gangstas and hustlas who got time on they back and they kids gotta go without a father.
 I wish I was invisible so I can rob a damn bank without getting caught (lol just kidding!)
 I wish I was invisible so that I can see people's pain.
 Respect yo' self and be solid 'cause the world don't give a damn about you. So try to stay low man and keep it solid.

-Lil' Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, see, we feel the opposite! We wish you were the bright and in everyone's face, not tucked away in this facility! We wish you were visible, so visible that the truth of what you say could blind everyone with its power, and force us all to think about the "invisible" suffering youth who grow up on the streets. So it's on you to get out, stay out, and for real, start making yourself as VISIBLE as you deserve to be.

I Love You

August 17th at 8:30 am, I had court. Guess what - I had a big surprise. It was my grandma. She came to see me and I was so glad 'cause I hadn't seen her for six years or so. Damn, what a surprise. I hella missed her. Even though it sucks to see her here and not out there.

After court I was able to get a special visit and chop-it-up with my grandma but the thing that hella touched me was that my grandma was actually opening herself to me. My grandma is a very closed person. She doesn't show love or give love. She never did to her kids, my mom, or us, her grandchildren, 'till I was able to get it out of her. Then she told me she loved me and gave me a big oh kiss. Which shocked me, but touched me a lot. I know it was hard for her, but deep down inside it felt good.

-Eva, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thanks. That's a good story. It's nice to hear a happy story like this one. And hooray for your grandmother for finally being able to open up.

I Love You Over The Phone

The last time I said I love you was about an hour or two ago over the phone to the girl that is having my kid.

I love you though words are powerful in a way. I used to say them to girls I really didn't love. I found out that you shouldn't say things you don't mean because people get hurt in the long run. I found that out plenty of times, but now I really have the love of my life and she is having my son in November. It's really exciting especially if you're having it with the woman that you love.

I just got to say this time that I'm in love that time and if I get hurt it will hurt ten times more than when you used to say it to girls that you didn't love.

-Ian, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, it's impressive that you have such insight into your past actions. Telling the truth it really essential to any relationship and it sounds like you are building a lot of trust right now with in your current one. Do you find that you get more out of your relationships when you let yourself be vulnerable? Sometimes that's when the most powerful experiences happen.

My Life

My life is a mystery
 Some days leading to misery my life
 Has it's ups and downs
 And days when I want burry my head
 In the grounds.

There are times when
 I feel like I'm larger than life
 Then there are times
 When all I want to do is fight.

My childhood was a
 Nightmare so I was forced to grow
 Up fast because in
 This lifetime if you not smart enough
 You won't last.

Selling drugs has
 Never crossed my mind cause if you
 Do you have to
 Constantly watch your back time after time.

My life is filled with
 Both love and hate and plenty
 Of hard decisions
 That I have to make or break.

But I still have
 Hope I still have faith and
 For that I have
 My family and baby momma to thank.

Yeah I got a
 Kid on the way so now I have a
 Family so now
 That means I have to work more
 To support my family.

My child is a
 Miracle from God and the most
 Beautiful woman
 Alive and I will always be there
 To see my child thrive.

That was a major choice
 That I had to make and I made
 It for a reason
 Cause it's my life and in it I make the decisions.

-Steven, Alameda

From The Beat: Amen! You're so good with a rhyme that we almost want to ask you to write us a poem about HOW you are going to provide for your family. What kind of job, what kind of life? Will you also go to school? What's your five year plan?

He Wouldn't Be Happy

If Jesus came back to earth he wouldn't be happy. This is for a lot of different reasons. The whole world isn't the way he wanted. A lot of countries hate each other, attack each other, and go to war. Also some countries treat their people bad and hurt and kill them. A lot of countries disrespect women too.

Jesus would also be disappointed with all the prejudice stuff. People are disliking and killing each other over dumb things like race and religion. Another thing too is all the rape and prostitution. Jesus would also would be disappointed in the crime rate. He would also hate all the gang related violence. If he was back he would change things but it wouldn't be easy.

-A Wise Young Man Alameda

From The Beat: We enjoyed your piece because we believe you. We also think if Jesus came back he wouldn't be happy. Are there things in the world that might make him happy, or do you think we've messed things up to a point where he wouldn't be able to focus on anything that makes him happy?

Hard Word Love

Man love hurts on the real
 Love can get you killed
 Love can cause something
 In your life that you will
 Regret love is a strong word
 Don't use it if it ain't real
 'Cause love a have yo'
 Mind so twisted you'll begin
 To not trust anymore love
 Will get you to start shooting
 Yo' gun love'll make you cry
 Love will make you get that
 Deep feeling in yo' heart
 Just don't use the word "love"
 'Cause when you say that
 Love word, it really means
 Something..

Like I love my life that's precious to me.

-Lil' Corey, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, Lil' Corey, what a great poem, and look how you end it on a slam dunk! So if you 'love' your life, then what's the best way of, for example, being faithful to your life, treasuring your life, treating your life with love and tenderness?

I Don't

... want to be here
 ... want to be around girls all the time
 ... want to eat this food
 ... want to wear these clothes
 ... want to be away from my family
 ... want to be alone
 ... I don't have a choice.

Since I don't know any of the people in here, I don't say I love them.

The last time I told someone I loved them was the night I got arrested. I knew I had a warrant and had to turn myself in, so I did. I was at my friend James' house and was waiting for the police to come pick me up.

I was on MySpace for awhile and told my good friend Jeff I was turning myself in. He told me to call him, so I did.

I was so scared to leave but I knew it would get worse if I didn't. I was crying and crying so bad and didn't want to go. We were talking for awhile when I heard the doorbell ring. I knew I had to go, so I told him. He told me to take care of myself and that he loved me. I told him I love him and I'll see him soon. I hung up and here I am, waiting until I can tell him I love him again.

-Vanessa, Santa Clara

FROM THE BEAT: This is a beautiful and dramatic moment that you have narrated for us. It sounds really powerful to tell this person you love them for the first time under such intense circumstances. All the little details make this scene really come to life. Keep writing!

Have You Ever

Have you ever
 Lived my life? Spent one minute in my shoes?
 If you haven't then tell me why you judge me
 The way you do

Have you ever
 Woke up in the morning wondering if this was
 Your last day on earth? Have you ever left your house
 Not knowing if you'd return?

Have you ever
 Seen your friend die right in front of your door?
 Have you ever saw a friend get shot next to you and
 wonder if the bullet was yours?

Have you ever
 Seen your Aunt get beat by your uncle for no apparent
 reason?
 Have you ever been beat because a team lost a game
 during the season?

Have you ever
 Loved someone so much but they don't really
 understand?
 Have you ever tried to start anew with someone but they
 don't give a damn.

Have you ever
 Lived my life? Spent one minute in my shoes
 If you haven't then tell me why you judge me
 The way you do.

-Steven, Alameda

From The Beat: We have never any of these things you describe, but that's the secret of gifted writers - even though we haven't had it happen, you present this so well that we could feel a glimmer of your pain in our own hearts. But now, it's not a question of judging you - it's more a question of wanting more for you than you've had so far. Because now your actions may be bringing you even more suffering, and man, haven't you suffered enough?

Gangs Drugs and Business

It isn't simply the drugs and alcohol that distort thinking.

The hood itself plants a seed of joining a gang in your mind. Overworked, broken families don't have the ability to fight streets that hold out the lure of belonging, thrills, fame, money, the American dream.

We have our own heroes. And because of the segregation imposed by the combination of white racism and the housing industry, the real estate agents who made money by block busting and the banks that made money by riddling and charging blacks higher interest rates and creating the ghettos, we have developed our own culture. Some of it you know about, the charged energy in African rhythm and complex rhymes of rap. Our unique twist in clothes, walk, and talk. Whites come in our lives via TV and in commercials, or as cops, or teachers.

Unemployment for black men in Oakland is maybe 30 to 40 percent. The national average is 5 percent. And as hopes for jobs diminish other alternatives the underground economy. The gangs provide heroes. The gangs teach skills.

The gangs provide love and protection, the gangs fill in where American flag plants the seed to join the army and die for your country. Attend the streets of Oakland, New Orleans, Texas, Mississippi, or La, you're likely to die for your set. When you don't have power, space becomes important.

So we fight over our territory. We fight to protect our neighborhoods. We fight to prove our ability and stay alive.

If we enlarge our space, we're safe, we have more power.

-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: See, with insights like this, you must get yourself free as soon as possible, not just free of the system but free of the mental chains that have kept you yourself down, because we need people like you - who have skills, heart, vision and wisdom, be real soldiers in the fight for justice and peace. Are you ready to join that kind of an army, because you are needed!

My Soul Survives

Lurking in tha shadows
Lies my secret life
Following me, haunting me
Giving me more strife
Reminders of the past
Of growing up too fast
I choose to stay hidden by tha darkness
So no one will see my sorrow
So no one will see tha pain
That leaves me wanting to not wake up tomorrow
Too many lines
Too many times
Too many tries
Too many attempted suicides
The ride is almost over
Death has finally arrived
My luck has run out and yet my soul survived
Believe me I know what pain's about as hurt and misery collide.

-Friskie

From The Beat: No, Friskie, you have far too much life within you to surrender to the inevitable end for us all! Fight that impulse to give up because it is too easy — and too permanent! Healing does not happen in darkness, but in the light. We know too many of your "secrets" for us to believe that they define who you are. We're not sure you even know your incredible strengths, but we know them, and we know that if you concentrate on those strengths, you can overcome your weaknesses. Luck plays a part, but only a part. Beyond luck is determination, discipline and spirit. You have all those things, Friskie. Don't underestimate their power to change your life!

Put more loot into scholarships and pay college fees for those who ain't got the feddy.

Are My Feeling True?

We been here before, this feeling of regret.
I keep looking for the right words
I want to let them know things will be different
But how many times has this happened
That I go to them and say how sorry I am
Sorry for not coming home last night
I lower my head like a hurt child
Tell them how I regret what I've done
Then it's all over
But do I really care like I say I do?
I feel as if I just say the words to please them
Do I really give a damn about anyone?
Do I care that my mom cried for me all night?
They say one cannot love others until they learn to love themselves
Maybe the question isn't if I'm sorry
Maybe the question is if I love myself
Love myself enough to love anymore else as well...

-Titi

From The Beat: We have such admiration for the honesty in this emotional poem of self-doubt. We can tell you this much: it is obvious that you DO give a damn about others. We believe that each time you express your sorrow for hurting those you love it is sincerely felt... even if your sincerity is not enough to keep you from repeating your mistakes. Inside that hurt child (which you are) there is a functioning brain and a functioning heart, two attributes that not everyone can claim. Change is inevitable. The only question is whether your gifts of thought and feeling will be enough to put you in charge of that change, or if others who now control your movements will dictate the changes in your future. Don't sell yourself short. You have it within you to live up to your conscience.

If I Was A Mayor

If I was a mayor in this community. I'll spend money on jobs, schools, sports programs and homeless instead of building new walkin' paths and remodeling parks and all that stuff that don't really mean a thing. They remodel parks, and gangstas and stuff goin' have a new kickin' spot. They just goin' end up messin' that park up, and it's just not going to be a park but a hot spot.

Schools is what we need. If we were to have more schools, they would be less of us in here incarcerated. Put more loot into scholarships and pay college fees for those who ain't got the feddy. Like this county is hot for buildin' this new juvenile hall. They should spend money wisely instead of wastin' grunion.

That's what I would do if I were mayor. I would also put dead presidents in sports and programs for youth instead of roamin' the streets like us now, sports for schools and just lil' leagues.

-Young P

From The Beat: We really like your ideas about how you would make the community better if you were in charge. We appreciate everything you suggested. But we wonder about building more schools because so many young people aren't even going to the schools they already have. We agree that schools are better than jails, but what can you do to make the schools more appealing so that young people attend?

It Doesn't Take Much

It doesn't take much
To see that I did have some doing in them separating
It doesn't take much
To understand that I have made enough of a mess
It doesn't take much
To feel their disappointment towards me and my mistakes
It doesn't take much
To know that they don't deserve all the stress I cause
It doesn't take much
To notice how tired they are as they sit there at my visit
It doesn't take much
For me to slip and fall time after time
It doesn't take much
For me to fall back into my bad habit
It doesn't take much
For me to fall into temptation
It doesn't take much
But...
All this cannot stop me because I have love in my heart
And...
It doesn't take much
To see that they still believe in me and everything I do
It doesn't take much
To know that they've worked so hard to keep me right
It doesn't take much
To feel comfort in each word of wisdom they speak to me
I live with guilt in my heart every day
Knowing I hurt the ones who love me most
And because of this
It doesn't take much
To believe in myself that I will change!

-Titi

From The Beat: And it doesn't take much for us to see that, blessed as you are to have the kind of love and support they still give you, no matter how many times you have let them (and yourself) down, that they, too, are blessed to have you. This is a blessing you don't quite appreciate yet, but we have been around a lot longer than you, and we can tell you from that experience that the guilt you are feeling is a sign of something deeper than all the mistakes you've ever made put together, and that the wisdom they share with you is only the beginning of your own wisdom, which you are already beginning to share with others. Yes, believe in yourself! We believe in you!

Suicide

I really didn't know, until today,
that joining a gang is suicide in a lot of ways.
When I think about it in my head,
all I see is this place or me dead.
I don't want to commit suicide, instead
I want to live a long life. I want to have a wife,
not sleep at night holding a knife.
Gangbang is suicide.
You think you have glory but when you see the cops you
run and hide.
Then you earn respect by doing crimes.
You hurt people that are innocent and leave your
momma crying.
Young people start dying;
gang tension gets hot and bullets start flying.
You think that you invincible
and that a hollow can't touch you. You don't get the
principle.
You cheat death once and now you want to carry a gun.
Gangs chew you up and then spit you out like gum.
You kill someone for the 'cause, now you housed in the
pen feelin' hella dumb.
Suicide is what it's called.
You never getting your life back; no matter how little it
cost, chapter closed ready to toss. Being in a gang, you
already lost.
Respect, honeys, love, family, and all.
You easily conquered by he law. They grab your freedom
by the balls.
You ain't going to see the light because they the boss.
You ain't going to get treated nice
because you a gangster, remember, a so-called tough
guy. No rights.
There ain't going to be enough eyes to watch your back.
So don't believe those lies.
They tell you that we homies until the end of time.
Do a serious felony crime together, and I'll guarantee
they going to drop that dime.

-Tavito

From The Beat: There is not a thought or a word in this great poem that we can take issue with. We are really interested, though, in how you moved from what you were to what you are, from thinking like a child who accepts whatever he's been told to thinking like an adult who questions the lessons of his childhood and begins to think for himself. That is a transition that too few people make (whether locked up or not, whether in gangs or not), and that is why we'd love to read your thoughts on that journey.

*Gangbang is suicide.
You think you have glory but when
you see the cops you run and hide.
Then you earn respect
by doing crimes.
You hurt people that are innocent
and leave your momma crying.*

I'm Wishing On A Star Tonight

I'm wishing on a star tonight,
With my closed eyes, all my might,
Speaking, my heart, through my tongue
Wishing for mercy for all the evil I done.
I've hurt people old and young for minor and simple
things, some dumb.
When I sleep I can't even find peace.
My dreams are miserable like disease.
I go to church and can't speak,
I feel like there's a demon inside of me. Forgiveness is
what I seek.
I need. I'm wishing on a star tonight
that my family an' lady give me a chance to make things
right,
that my fight with society ends,
and we can become real good friends.
My past I cannot change,
but I hope my future won't be the same, living my life
close to the edge.
I've felt lead travel near my head, had alcohol poisoning,
nearly dead.
Instead, I'm still here with my life. I'm wishing on a star
tonight.

-Tavito

From The Beat: There're things in all our pasts we wish we could change/ But all we can do is hope they will help our future to rearrange/We feel the depth of your heartfelt prayer/And repeat how moved we are, not least because it is so rare/To find such profound remorse at your young age/Instead of the usual blame and misdirected rage/We hope your wish for forgiveness comes true/But we know such forgiveness begins with you/The demon you're fighting that's inside/Is within each of us (and it's often called pride)/But something else inside is worth more than a passing nod/And that is that you are also made in the image of God.

Welcome To My Life

It was always lonely. Moms always gone while my dad
is out getting high!
I realized a couple months after I turned 12, I would
start doing things on my own.
I decided to leave home only to get forced into this thing
called "The Game."
Here is where my whole story starts.
Young, dumb, out of control,
Free to do what I wanted, turning tricks, serving knocks,
Busting checks, trying not to get caught.
I told my mom I was fine, not to worry, I will be back in
time —
Only to get caught in the mix of chaos, confusion, along
with crazy illusions.
It felt like one step out of a million towards home.
It seemed so far away, but really it was my selfish way.
My mind was gone trying to figure out what was wrong.
I tried to make the pain go away only for it to come back
within the next day.
I hold it in. Yeah, it hurts that bad but I hate being sad.
I spent the last two years in and out of mental facilities
and now I'm in jail.
Wow! It's crazy! What the hell. This isn't me!
I get tired of this person I came to be,
But is it really time to change and forget about the
game?

-Molly

From The Beat: We think you already know the answer to the last question in this fine poem. If this isn't you, if your tired of jail and mental facilities, if all that you've tried has not made the pain disappear, then when you ask the question, "Is it really time to change," what do you think the answer is?

My 'Hood

My 'hood is still going to be the same
No matter how hard I try, ain't nothing going to change
But what I know is that I can take my best homies out
the game

Mostly because I know they have a good brain
And all they need is a elite leader to lead the way
I'm somebody you can say

That gots much love for their 'hood all day
So far it's doing me good because I want to change to
avoid the grave

If it weren't for my 'hood

I wouldn't be strong enough to know I could
I've been seen in reality

What you see in gangster movies, that's not what I want
to be

There's no glory in selling drugs in the streets

There's no fame in putting rivals to sleep

The police is on the rise because in their eyes

Mexican-Gangsters terrorize

-Tavito

From The Beat: We have always believed that those who control the money and have the power don't really fear the gangsters who take each other out on our streets (and therefore keep attention from being focused in their direction). What they really fear are thinkers, people who begin to analyze the world they live in and, through writing and other acts of leadership, challenge the power structure. You have it in you to be such a leader, which makes you truly dangerous in the best sense of the word. The system is well prepared to take on violence with even greater violence; what they find far more threatening is the courage it takes to come to the conclusions you have, and then to make them public. Thank you, again, for being that kind of person.

My Life

I look at my life and I 100% know I want to give it a new try.

I grew in a gang-orientated society where nobody cares about me.

When I say me, I mean the young kids running around the street,

The ones with no fathers to keep their lives clean.
Single mother works all night, picks up day shifts to try to get financial bills paid on time. No supervision, lack of discipline leads to life of crime.

You join a gang to get attention, acceptance which you're dying for.

I went through that road.

I have a father wound. Got locked up for 2 1/2 years in a room.

Thought my life was doomed.

I look at my life and 100% know I can change.

Be a better player in the game (life).

Because things can't always be the same.

My past shame ends today.

It's time to put glory, success, freedom and wisdom next to my NAME.

-Tavito

From The Beat: You have extraordinary gifts, Tavito, which make your determination to change your life for the better that much more certain to happen. In just a few lines at the beginning of this powerful poem, you managed to convey the heart of the problem on our city streets — a problem which we only seem to address after it erupts in violence. We need thinkers like you who understand the problems that lead to the violence so that preventive medicine (like free classes in parenting, job training, free medical/psychological assessments, and so much more) can be applied before these childhood wounds erupt into life-long patterns of social decay.

WEEKLY • WRITINGS

Who Cares?

Who cares I'm a prostitute, and sell drugs for a living just to get by each day?
Who cares my life is upside down and out of control and it gets real hard sometimes? Who cares that I'm barely a teen, and been making grown choices?

Who cares that I got pregnant and had a miscarriage?

Who cares that I'm locked up right now?

Who cares that I'm trying to make certain change in my life?

Who cares that I have dreams and want to be a forensic investigator?

Who cares that I might not live to see tomorrow?

After all, we're living in a dream! The closest people to your heart are the ones that will hurt you the most, so the outcome of it all is no one really cares.

-Molly

From The Beat: We can't agree with your conclusion that no one really cares, though you may not have found those that do yet. But it seems to us that in order to find others who care, you must first care for yourself. Selling your body and drugs "to get by each day" is a prescription for low self-esteem, and for judging yourself harshly and thinking the worst about yourself. Yes, you are making adult choices, but you are not yet an adult, and you must be open to the possibilities that as you mature into adulthood, you will be able to exercise other choices that don't injure you as much as the choices you've been making. Don't lose sight of your dreams for the future.

Just Trying To Make Money

Standing on the corner of my 'hood

Just chillin', got the ya in my hand ready to make the sale

Some fools walking up, there's something funny but I can't tell

But as long as I make my money I ain't trippin'

He pulls out a strap and I start thinking

Damn I'm only a teen and I'm going to hell.

-Aj

From The Beat: To the system, you're just like the ya you sell/You're making money for them, but oh well/You wonder if you're going to hell and that's fair/But have you ever considered that you're already there?

Drifting On A Memory

Drifting on that one memory back in the days, kicking back with the homies having a good time, having that summer breeze, having my girls by my side writing me letters while I'm locked up telling her always on my mind time passes slowly while seeing homies getting locked up everything is just drifting on a memory.

-Rambo

From The Beat: Isn't it a shame that you have to drift on memory instead of on living your life! Do you ever drift on thoughts of the future — and how you can avoid being processed through this system?

The Love Of Money

I'm this happy person in the world — someone that I'm not!

Does the money really make me? Yes! It's true, money makes the world go round.

But what happens when it revolves too quickly and slowly your world start falling down?

Is it real love when he tell you he love you after you get done with a trick?

But in reality you're the trick giving him yo' mind, power, and soul.

Where did the affection go when he called you out yo' name

And raised his hand towards you and caused you pain?

I thought it was supposed to be protection along with affection.

He said he was sorry and it wouldn't happen again.

But I thought about it for a minute and told him you not a real man.

What happened to our game plan?

Yeah, I know it's all about money

And all you say is, "It's all on a breezy"

You always drove me crazy

I hard to leave you!

Life's hard but I'll make... it I don't need you.

-Molly

From The Beat: You're absolutely right! You don't need any man who hits you and then tries to justify it. In fact, let's restate that: You don't need any BOY who has not yet grown into manhood. It may be hard to leave this boy, but we guarantee that it would be harder if you did not leave him!

Life Is The Hardest Path To Cross

Life is made of two paths. To your left there's the path of success. It's hard yes, but think about it. What's down the road to failure? A chance for death to come knocking at your door? Is that what you want? Or do you want to hold your head high and have the courage to have faith in yourself and leave everything in the past and move on?

What's so good about the path to success? A new life, a new start and a chance to get right and show the people who look down on you that you can overcome your past mistakes and look forward. One day eventually conquering your dreams. Until then, life is the hardest path to cross.

-Molly

From The Beat: In truth, except for a very fortunate few, life presents all kinds of problems and pain for all of us. But it's also true that the obstacles are much greater for some than for others due to circumstances over which they have no control. The hope is that you can identify those things in your life over which you do have control, and exercise that control in way that is more likely to lead you to success than to failure. You have the brains to do that, and we hope you do!

A Camcorder Through My Mind

I think that if you took a camcorder through my mind you would see beef because where I'm from, people don't make it out the jets. Only way you would make it if you move away, and sometimes that don't work. In my head, you gone see me and my goons on somebody we beefing with. I know it sound shady but I'm a shady boy, ya dig.

But I got a good side too, like when I'm with my girl I'm just chillin'. You also would see my family too. But I'm in jail doing my thang just missing my homies and family.

But that's what you would see if you go through my head. I'm done get out my head. The show is over.

-Smoke

From The Beat: Of course you have both a dark side and a light side — all of us do. But we think you take a lot of pride in you and your "goons" shady behavior, and as long as you're proud of that, you'll just keep giving away your precious freedom to this cold and uncaring system. What a waste!

People Muggin'

When somebody tries to mean mug me, I mug them back an' ask them, "What you lookin' at? Where you from? What chu bang?" You know cause it's what you gotta do. You can't be no sucka an' jus' look away like a punk. I gotten in a couple fights 'cause of somebody muggin' me. Dat ain't coo'. I hate dat shhh.

-Yayo

From The Beat: We took out your last line because it's not mandatory to smash and we don't let The Beat used to hate on your so-called enemies. It's too bad a look can be the justification for violence. Sounds pretty childish to us.

Freedom

1 mo' week until I redeem my freedom

Grab dat box of 'Ports

Call my boys, then I meet 'em

Do you see the cops, yeah

I'm flippin' 'em off, I see 'em

I hate da boys, that cop crew

Making your people snitch on you

Labeled as a snitch

Careful who you trust 'cause they'll turn brand new

-Mr. Boombastic

From The Beat: You only need to fear that trust/If you're feeding off the bottom crust/Go ahead and flip them off/But if you do dirt, they'll have the last laugh/And since it's a fact that there'll always be snitches/You'd better find another way to gain your riches/Because unless you give them something to say/They'll have nothing for the cops to pay.

Always On My Mind

Baby, I wish I could tell you how much I love you. I miss your pretty smile, your cute face. Sometimes I wonder if you ever think of me, if you ever think about the good-ass times we had. You were the only one who made me smile. You were the one who brought my feelings back.

I'm sorry if I made you cry that day at the BBQ. I did my stupid shhh and now I'm in a cold cell. Sometimes at night I cry in the dark, my tears falling down breakin' down on the floor like ice. I'm drifting on a memory wit' you at my side.

-Rambo

From The Beat: Do you ever think about whether she wonders if your words of love are enough? Whatever you did to allow the system to take you away from her was obviously more important to you at that moment than she was. Maybe that's what she's thinking about, and that causes her own tears to fall and shatter on the floor.

What Would I Do?

Well, I put it like this. In my community you are never safe 'cause there are a lot of gangs. You may not be a gang member, but hey, you are wearing the wrong color, so...

About guns, I think we should keep them on the streets for other people's safety. For reals, I said about the color of skin, well, I would like to take out of my community the racism out of the street. I would also change all the jails and make more schools so young men can make something of their life in the future.

-Johnny

From The Beat: We wish you would choose just one topic and focus all your attention on that. You have some very good ideas, but when you spread your time among all three topics, you can't really develop those ideas thoroughly. For example, how do guns on the streets serve people's safety? We see so much destruction that they cause, we wonder what will happen when everybody is armed. You say you would change all the jails, but you don't tell us how you would change them. As for more schools, what would you do make what goes on inside those schools more interesting so that young men and women would not drop out?

My Missing Dreams

My life is a mess

Always doing time because of my crime.

I can't stop, and I won't stop.

Doin' a lot of crime

Spending my days doin' time in a cage

I'm turning like a savage animal

My feelings are gone I'm alone

Nobody in my life

They disappear without a sign

My dreams are gone lost in a cold life

I'm a G from San Mateo

On the block is where I stay but

Look at me now I'm in jail wit Rambo

I'm a keep my head up and stay up

Because we're leaders and not followers

-Demon

From The Beat: Can't stop? Don't be silly. You ARE stopped right now. If you're a leader, all you've managed to do is lead yourself into the life you describe as "a mess." No, you're not leading anyone anywhere. You're following a bunch of other people who've given you marching orders, like a soldier in any army taking orders from his superiors, marching into battle because you're told to. You say your dreams are gone, so what were your dreams? Maybe you'll open your eyes in time to see that achieving them — or giving them up — is a matter of your own choosing.

I Hate Juvenile Hall

I hate Juvenile hall

The food's too little

I don't get much calls

Just sit here and wait till times get better

I just finish writing my 20th letter

I hate juvenile hall

I miss my fams

I'm used to sittin' here starin' at the wall

I miss kickin' it smokin' blunts

12 days passed and it feels like months

I hate juvenile hall

No freedom

The only freedom I get is working out playin' ball

I'm just glad I wake up and see the light

Time's flyin' faster because I pray every night

I hate juvenile hall

-BC

From The Beat: You hate it when you're here, but when you're out there, you do the kinds of things that lead you here! So how much do you really hate it? If you're just sitting here "waiting till times get better," you've missed the critical point that only you can make times get better. So, rather than just waiting, what are you doing to change things?

What's In A Look

I think that in a look a lot can be said, whether it's a look of lust, hate or disgust. I feel like I don't need approval from anyone. And that is all a look really is. If someone looks at me with a sign of hate, then something might go down whether it's fighting or nowadays shooting and killing. If someone looks at you with a sign of disgust, then it depends on who is looking. If it is a female, then she might be called names. But if it's from a dude, then he might be fought or called names And if it is a look of lust then that look might be furthered into a sex sessions.

-Phil Mangla

From The Beat: How easily you justify violence because of a look. It reminds us of when we were small children, crying or fighting if we thought someone looked at us the wrong way. We're grateful we grew up.

My Mind

If you were going through my mind with a video camera, you will see me always thinking about my family because I miss them a lot. Every day I wish I was just home with my family. And I regret doing what I did to get myself in Hillcrest. But now I know how much you suffer in here. The food is bad and people always tell you what to do, and I'm tired of that. And I'm never coming back.

-Kevin

From The Beat: We appreciate your certainty that you're never coming back, but we take a "wait and see" attitude. We've read too many other promises never to return that somehow don't get kept. So it's up to you. We're curious though. Before you came here and experienced it, what did you expect juvenile hall to be like?

These Eyes, How Bright

These eyes,
So sad
So bright
To have known so much,
Yet to have seen so little
To love
And yet to be so hated
To love
The greatest gift ever given
The greatest burden ever bestowed
Loving, yet not loved
Outcasted by his peers
Respected by his elders
His eyes
So naïve
Yet so wise,
These eyes, how bright
For you I wish tonight
A good future
For I will sacrifice myself for your health
For I say to you tonight
These eyes, how bright.

-Urza

From The Beat: This poem, so mysterious, so difficult to fathom. For whom do you wish a good future? For whom will you sacrifice yourself — and how would such a sacrifice help whomever it is being bestowed upon?

The food is bad and people always tell you what to do, and I'm tired of that. And I'm never coming back.

My Town

If I was a leader of my town,
I'd save my people from falling to the ground
By takin' violence and drugs away.
To keep me and my people safe
I'd also guide the bad to that right door
By gettin' money from the rich to the poor

-Tamasi

From The Beat: So, you want to be Robin Hood and steal from the rich to give to the poor? Well, we don't know about that, but we admire your desire to take drugs and violence from your community. Since every change begins with yourself, what are you doing to guide yourself "to that right door?"

Mayor

If I was a mayor of the city, I would try to give more people jobs and I would try to get the police because they do things wrong. I'm not saying all police are bad, but a lot of them are. You may ask why. Well, the reason why is on Jan. 16, 2007, I got a phone call from my cousin, and she told me her dad, which is my uncle, was killed by the SFPD. They tried so hard to cover the murder up and they couldn't and the truth came out. That's why I don't like the cops.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: We don't like putting "Anonymous" as the writer, so next time pick a Beat name. Having said that, we're very sorry about your uncle. You say the cops tried to cover up their "crime" but couldn't. Does this mean they will be prosecuted? What is going to happen?

Money

Money, money, money
It comes and it goes out
Life paid and full of riches
That's what it's all about
Nothing's left to lose
So the world is mine to gain
My respect and my attitude
Is what brings me all my fame
But when I leave this life
Will I get what I deserve
Some say life isn't sweet
But mine is just dessert

-J.R.

From The Beat: Is being locked up part of those "just desserts" you describe? What determines what you (or anyone) "deserves?" What makes your life so sweet... and what are your plans for making it sweeter?

Do You See What I See

Me, I see myself on the streets doing what I do
When you do some trouble, trouble would come after you
Right now I'm locked up waiting to get out
Hoping I don't come back, but I doubt
I'm on probation until I'm 18; in the meantime I can't hide
Cops always identify me being on probation
And stop me for no reason, search me thinking
I got something, but they realize
They ain't got nothing on me so they leave
All I want is to keep it coo'
I met my one and only who is true
She said she'll wait for me no matter what or how long
So that makes me think she's the one
But on the streets I always gotta run from cops tryna stop me
But they can't catch a fast G
I was born and raised in the 'hood
So I'm always up to no good
What I see is life would never change
It will always be the same
Do you see what I see!

-Chapin

From The Beat: No, we don't see what you see. We see life changing all the time for every living thing. The only question is whether you determine the change or whether you let others determine it for you. And since it appears you want to deny obvious facts ("...they can't catch a fast G"), it also appears that you're going to let "them" make the changes that will certainly come in your life. It sounds like you believe you're smarter than the cops and that you can't be caught, but here you are! The reason we don't see what you see is that we don't think you've opened your eyes yet!

What Would You Do?

I would like to change my young people's ways, and help them think about what they doing is wrong because your family gone be there when you need them, but your gang that you in ain't gone be there all the time like your family. But when you in, your family gone be the one who come see you, not your friends. And if you got a baby, your friends ain't go take care of your baby. It's gone be your family.

But you can't change nobody if they don't want to change. But I will like to change my ways so I will have to work on that and stay away from bad people that do bad things.

-Baby Brimnator

From The Beat: If you really want to change, it's within your power to do it. Besides staying away from bad friends (which is never easy), what else do you plan to do to make sure you don't have to come to a place like this ever again?

The System

I been locked up since I was a teen, doing heavy time in maximum security B-8 in Santa Clara county till I was 15. That gave me enough time to think about what I'm going to do when I got out, and I told myself I ain't gone come back. But I did, and now I'm sitting here looking stupid waiting to get out.

People say, "Oh! It ain't shhh," but it is when they got you in a room 23 hours a day. But right when I got out, I got right back on that hype and took flight, and a couple of minutes got me some time. Keep it real!

-Ice Cold

From The Beat: Yes, we'd like you to keep it real. You promised yourself you wouldn't come back, and then almost immediately went back to doing what is almost guaranteed to send you back (and did). So, what we want to know is, what would it take for you to be able to keep the promise not to come back?

Running Them Streets

Running them streets tryin' to make it to that mill.

Happen on any thing movin' sittin' high lookin' at them haters doing what they do best, posting on the block so I can put in some work if some ninja roll through.

Hittin' them backyards when gang task hit only ride with solid ninjas from the hood that don't be scared when funk come though.

-Vee

From The Beat: It looks like you're preparing yourself to go back into the world the same way you came into the hall. If your mind stays the same as before, then this experience in CYA is useless and you will find yourself behind more walls.

No Answer

Why did Weezy F. Mac have to go? No answer

Why did Davon had to go? No answer...

Why did JJ have to go? No answer...

Why did D-Scrilla had to go?

No answer..

Why did Greedy had to go?

No answer...

I wonder how the projects would be if these fallen soldiers was here. Was it because ninjas had they show or they just was haters... I don't know... no answer... just why man...a moment of silence for my ninjas.

It was an answer to why they had to go.... It still wouldn't matter 'cause they didn't deserve it...

-Lil' Corey

From The Beat: We have no answers, but like you said, they didn't deserve to die/ just like you, we're stuck on the "why" And you don't either, which means you need to ask yourself some hard questions about your lifestyle - or should we call it a deathstyle? You have a responsibility to live on and make your positive mark on the world, in the name of your loved ones who were cut down too soon...

Miles Away

Out here in a strong place

Nowhere to hide

Don't know where my space is out there you walk alone miles

between us I cant come home some day who know's when

I'll come home only if fate allows we will meet again.

-Shorty

From The Beat: You don't mention who you are writing this to, but it seems to be to a special lady, we're guessing. Did she leave you or did you leave her? We're just hoping that one day you will meet this person again because they must be important enough to write a piece about!

RIP

What it do Beat, this yo' boy Shorty from Hayward well I got an RIP for Allan's Dad, because he passed away last week, and Allan didn't come because he missed his plane so he didn't make it.

Allan does so much for us, so we can have our piece in the Beat and read it that why this piece is for Allen's dad rip you will never be forgotten.

-Shorty

From The Beat: We all need the extra bit of support when something tragic happens. Thank you for writing this piece out to Allan's father, and he will truly appreciate it.

The Dark Side Beneath The Surface

If you look into my eye you'll tell me you see a charmin', solid, sincere, cool, and funny dude.

The thing is you see these things but you can't see the dark side. The dark side lies beneath the surface. I neva want to unleash it, because if I do, it's bad for whoever in my path.

On da other hand you'll see another mack. It's not fakeness I'm showin', it's just I'm laid back and try not to get into the b.s. that happens in here and on da outs. But sometimes everyone'll get side tracked. When you look into my-eyes you'll see a king, prince, and a kingpin all in one.

You'll see a solid ninja who'll beast it out if it ever came down to war. You'll see a loving coving caring, smooth when wanna be dude, who's outgoing, smart, and honest and modest. My soul's powerful.

-Boe

From The Beat: Your mind seems to be solid and ready for anything that happens to you. As long as you stay positive and keep your thoughts positive, you will be all those things that people see you as. You could be all those things and more if you really want to be. Just make sure you don't unleash the dark side!

All The Good, All The Bad

If you was to put a camcorder in my mind you would see the love that I have for my family, the rights that I wanna do, but there's something in my mind that's telling my rights wrong.

If you was to put a camcorder in my mind you would see a couple of naked booties running all across the camcorder. If you was to put a camcorder through my mind you will see all the good memories that I had a long time ago that made me happy. If you was to put a camcorder in my mind you still will see the hate that I have that I am tryna control.

-Marco

From The Beat: You will see many things in a mind and it varies with each and every person. We hope that the good in your head outweighs the bad and that your love for the family helps you overcome your current obstacle. Just keep in mind what you went through, so your camcorder can replay it when you are about to commit another crime.

Stuck in this Box

Stuck in this box

Four walls with a door with no handle

Stressin', tryin to find a way out

Kick and kick, the door still won't open

Thinking about family

If they're all right

If not I can't do anything about it

Because you stuck in that box, time goes by

And you still stuck

Nothin' to do so you think about the past and all the fun times When the door opens, you come out and post with the homies

When one of them say duck and gun shots ring past your head

You're runnin' to your family and they all get hit

Next thing you know

You hit too

Then you wake up in that white box and it was just a dream.

-Shorty

From The Beat: Some dreams cause us to really reevaluate our lives and think about what we are going to do with it. Let this dream of yours be a wake up call for you so this won't become your reality - because we all don't want our families hurt.

If He Came Back To Earth

If all my ninjas came back I would tell them how much I love them and how much fun we have. I would sit down with them and talk about all the messed up shhh we done in the past. All we would do is just sit back and get high and laugh at all the bad shhh we did. My ninjas was took out the game by some j-cat ninjas how was hatin' on they shine.

All my potnas was took out the game by some haters because they want to bang what we bang. I pray to God that my love one could come back to earth to smoke that last blunt and pop that last pill wit' me but all we could do is think about the past and love all my love ones who passed. You ask if what would happen if me and my enemies had to switch places for one day? It wouldn't never work because my enemies couldn't walk a mile in my shoes.

-Dre

From The Beat: The thing about this piece that is sad as that you can't see the world beyond the blunt, the pill, the memories of getting into trouble. There's a huge world out there, full of mountains and planes and magic and every different kind of person and activity, and yet your vision isn't going out beyond the few blocks you call your "own". Look farther out into the big world, don't let yourself become a mental prisoner!

I Miss My Granny

I miss my granny,

I miss the times you cooked my favorite meals,
I miss the times you gave me money for my clothes,
I miss the times you came to my baseball games,
I miss the time you told me what to get my girl on

Valentines Day,

I miss the times you came and took me out to eat,

I miss the times you let me drive yo' car,

I miss the times you told me not to snort that coke,

I miss the times you told me not to blow that dro' and
sip that bo',

I love you, I miss you and RIP granny.

-Lil' Swoll

From The Beat: Your Granny must have been an amazing and loving woman - she took care of you, she watched out for you, and when she watched you play she must have been so proud of you! Do you still play baseball? What were the other things about you that she was proud of?

Love For My Girl

The last time I told somebody "I love you" was last night in a letter to my girl.

I have such a deep love for her that I sometimes wonder if I deserve her. I told her "I love you & miss you, I wish I could be with you, see you, hold you, kiss you." I couldn't do anything but think of her.

Since I don't have anything positive but her to think of, all I can do is wait to get out and wait to have her in my arms again. There is nothing that can change what is between us.

No one can come between us. I love Karen always and 4 ever no matter what. But words aren't actions and all I can do is tell her I'll show her I love her. No matter what it takes I won't make a mistake.

I love Karen

-Ryan

From The Beat: The depth of your love really comes through here. Plus, like you said, she's what's positive in your life. But that won't be enough... what else is positive. Do you have family support? Do you have a teacher in school who sees good in you? Do you have a program or a group where people push you in the right direction? We want both you and your girl to have a long free life together - but to make that happen, don't you need to reach out to as much positive influence as you can find?

Stay Away From J-Cats

Men sitting in camp doing time is hella bootsie -- especially if you messing wit' j-cats.

As long as you mess with j-cats you ain't gone be going home so do yo time don't run and it's a easy program as long as you leave j-cats alone.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: You could say the same thing about life on the streets too, right? You know exactly which of your friends are going to get you in trouble, and which of them are going to lead you to positivity, right? Have you got friends who are "trouble" that you might need to stay away from on the outs?

Checkin' In

What's up Beat, it's Lil Capy writing at you from camp. Well yeah I'm here just with the homies trying to do my time so I can get out in be back on the streets with my real family.

Spend some time with my mom so I can give back the time I wasted by being in hall and in camp. The plan I got so I can not come back is to get a job and stay with my family.

I'm also writing about my dead homies. This is for my homies Dash, G-money, lil Arturo, Goofy. They were victims of the streets may my untouchable homies rest in peace.

So yeah I'm just trying to get out of camp so I can be back in the streets doing my thang with my homies in the hood. Oakland to Berkeley, connected all day.

-Capy

From the Beat: We put your two pieces together because it's like one piece talked about getting a job and getting out of trouble, the other one talks about being back in the hood doing your thing. We've seen too many people try to do both at the same time, and just get caught back up. Do you want that to happen to you? What kind of a job are you thinking about? Full time or part time? Do you have help finding one? Let us know and maybe we can help you.

Ain't Coo' Here, but Do Ya Program

Man, bra this shhh ain't coo'. I been locked up since March 20. I know it don't seem long but it's hella long, 'cause I was In the old hall, then the new hall kickin' back, then the camp house.

It's coo' up here, but it be days you don't want to mess with nobody. The staff be goin' bad 'cause we don't do what we supposed to be doin', you know how that be.

I'm not gon' let go let this camp incarceration hold me down though. I'm gon' keep my head up.

-Lonnie

From the Beat: You've done a great job keeping yourself out of trouble while you were in here. Do you think you've grown at all as a person from your time locked up, or do you think that this has been "dead time"?

A Bonnie to Clyde

Shhh I really don't care no more. People is fake, love is fake, trust is fake, and when you don't have any of these things in yo' life you basically feel like you on yo' gun.

Shhh a ninja need a Bonnie to his Clyde, somebody to hold him down when he doing time but fahget, it ain't no solid ones out there shhh like my ninjas say fahgit being solid what's in yo wallet.

-Murph The Youngsta

From The Beat: The tragedy of the original Bonnie and Clyde (from the movie that made them famous), is that Clyde was impotent ... he couldn't have sex unless he'd committed an act of violence. Killing innocent people turned him on! How messed up is that? So actually, the last thing you need is a Bonnie, because you're way better of a person than Clyde was.

My Ninjas

I love my ninjas
I'll ride for my ninjas,
If I could I'll fly for my ninjas,
I'll try for my ninjas,
When they start gassin' I'm gonna fry for my ninjas,
I'll shoot for my ninjas,
I'll do time for my ninjas,
I'll do the crime for my ninjas,
Throw up signs for my ninjas,
Toast Bacardi lime for my ninjas,
Plus all my ninjas snort the Kristina.
Can't nobody come between us.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Nobody can come between you, except 1. the law 2. Death 3. Mistrust that comes from one of you getting caught and the others being afraid he'll snitch 4. Some kind of messed up drama that comes from being messed up on drugs 5. The sorrow of family seeing a group of boys drop out of school and mess up their futures. We know you love your boys - but you're not going to do them any good, or yourself, by walking down a path of negativity.

Cheating Ain't Cool

I got away with cheating but that ain't ever cool. I kept it solid with my girl, and she told me that shhh is hella rude. I took it to the heart and started feeling kinda bad, so I walked away from her 'cause I was really hella mad.

I didn't mean to hurt her 'cause I would never want that, that's just like her doing something behind my back.

-Demarcus

From The Beat: Are you still with her? And since then have you and she both been faithful to each other? How long have you been together?

Cheating and Getting Away With It

A time I have cheated and got away with it was on a girl. This other girl, a good friend of mine wanted to come over to my house and I had never hooked up with her so I didn't think anything was gonna happen.

So I told her to come over and we ended up hooking up. I never told my girl what had happened but I told her that she had come over and she did expect something.

I told her that I wouldn't do that ...and that it didn't happen I got away with it though.

-John

From The Beat: One thing about cheating is that when you are cheating on someone, and they don't know about it, you can start to feel contempt for them, feel like they're a sucker. Of course they aren't, but the feeling is still there and it can affect how you see them, make you look down on them a little. Did that happen with your girl?

Cheat Death

I'm still here, when I could have been dead or in the hospital.

I was young riding my bike down this big ass hill and I used no brakes. Then I pass an intersection, and rolling down I see a car at the corner of my eye. It's too late to hit the brakes so I take a chance and it barely misses me by 1 or 2 feet!

After that I feel that I'm living on borrowed time, so I'm really dead. I never ride a bike down a big hill without brakes.

-Elisi

From The Beat: Every piece you write feels like it's happening right in front of us. Vivid and real. And in this one you end on a note we forget - aren't we all living on borrowed time? And shouldn't we all be grateful for whatever we've got? And fight to keep safe and make it last as long as possible?

Cheating and Settling Down

What's up Beat?!? Another week in da hall ...and I'm on da topic that been on my mind. That's "cheating."

You might ask "why is that." And the reason is something I never understood or believed in until I started to see it, and that is karma. I can't remember a time where I was caught in the act, but I can remember a lot of times where I was busted --probably, now that I think really hard, because I was wrong.

I wouldn't like it if the shoe was on the other foot. I ain't gon' lie, it was fun. I don't know why I do it. I guess it's just in my blood line.

The sad part about it is I don't intentionally do it. I really don't have no control over it, 'cause of who I am and my personality. One day I will be able to settle down, but today just ain't the day.

Plus I wouldn't like it at all if somebody did it to my sisters or my mom.

-Lil' Tonio: God's child

From The Beat: For the most part, it does seem like it's too young to get committed to just one person when you're still a teenager, and we're sure that you are the kind of person who will eventually find a girl he loves so much that cheating on her would feel like cheating on himself. But don't ever think that you "have no control." ... you can control yourself in any and all ways, if you believe you can.

Conflict

I did a lot of time in my life and it is cool. Sometimes I feel sad sometimes I just be like "everybody I know do it" but some people don't do it -- but sometime I like it.

-Allin

From The Beat: We called this piece conflict because it seems like part of you likes it and part of you doesn't. What if you made a list of the pros and cons of the criminal life, and then looked at that list to decide which you liked better?

Write Polite!

Time to write polite,

No more fights

But you can see me ask my brother,

Eat yo' hits like I'm rubber

Have yo' mother start to stutter,

You probably undercover,

Do you got a wire, you known as a liar

Have you runnin' 'til you tired,

Get hired or fired,

Motha... I'm yo' sire

No hesitation, money's motivation

-Jrc

From The Beat: We know you've been working hard to "clean up" your writing for publication... in this piece there's no explicit violence, but your voice is still such a powerful weapon that there is anger and threat in what you say... it makes us think of all the young people in the system who use their skills and brainpower to fight each other, instead of to raise themselves up. We wonder - in your life, do you let your incredible intelligence work for you? Or does it work against you?

I Love You Means Thick and Thin

The times I said I love you was way too many and unnecessary reasons. If I felt like it was benefiting me, then I love everything. But the times when it meant the most was between my family and my baby mother. These are the people who have been there for me through thick & thin. There is my mother, brother, and my baby's mother.

-LeAndre

From The Beat: This distinction is so deep, it shows that you know the difference between when you're telling the truth and when you're lying (a lot of people do so much lying they get to the point when they don't know the difference). Which feels better?

I Love You

Hey girl don't you know?
I love you
Yo' smile, yo' laugh
the way you shake yo'...lol
I love you girl
each moment we spend together
'till the end
much more than just a friend
I love you girl

- Nesto

From The Beat: What a nice shout-out to your girl! We hope she gets to read it. She's a lucky lady to have a loving boyfriend like you.

I Love You

The last time I said that "I love you" was when I talked to my best friend, right before I got arrested and came to juvenile hall. That kind of love is called platonic love but I love my bra more than a friend, he like my other half. I don't consider him that because its like he one of the people that when I need sumethin he'll always be there for me, and when I want to do something he would support me or tell me it's hella stupid to do.

- Johnny

From The Beat: That is the best kind of friend... one who supports you but who also calls you out when you're doing something wrong. You are lucky to have one another.

My Cheating

My cheating was when I was fifteen. I was with my girl for about a year, then the love of my life came and I left my girl and got with a new one, man!! I ain't going to lie I have always cheated on every girl I got with, 'cause this is my life.

- Bones

From the Beat: Was it any different when you were with "the love of your life"? What is it about your lifestyle that causes you to be unfaithful? Is this the way you want to live your life? Is there another way?

Cheating and Getting Away With It

I did a lot of things in my life which I got away with that I would never do again or tell about. Like one day when I was chillin' with my potnas one day after blown hella grapes (weed!!!) we saw these the ninjas slippin'.

They both had cell phones and nice clothes so we knew they had dough. So we first knock they but out then we striped them took every thang which how I wish I never did. So yeah, don't snitch now peace...

-Dookie D

From The Beat: It almost seems like it's not worth robbing other people because a) it feels bad deep down and b) it's not worth the police. Do you think you'd have done it if you'd been with different potnas?

I Love You

Man I said so many times I love you and I never meant it. One time I told this girl I loved her but I was just telling her that 'cause I knew what she wanted to hear so I can get in her panties, but as time went on I actually started to love her but it was too late because she found out I was playing her just to get in her pants. So from now on I am only gon' say I love you when I mean it for reals.

- Blast

From The Beat: If you could go back in time and do things differently, what would you change about that relationship? Do you sometimes wish you could be with her again?

Who I've Cheated

Hey Beat this is Lazy and today I am going to start writing about something I cheated on I cheated on so many girls and I cheated the cops they didn't know me, and when they ask me for my name I gave them a wrong name because they were looking for me.

And that's how I cheated on some people.

But I cheated on myself when I got arrested ...and now I have to be here for six months.

-Lazy

From The Beat: So if you cheated yourself, that means that now you owe yourself. How are you going to pay yourself back for what you took. What can you do to enrich yourself - mentally, emotionally - during this time locked up?

If He Came Back To Earth

If Jesus were to come back to earth right now I think his message to the world would be for us all to be in peace with each other and to stop killing one another and causing harm to ourselves and the people around us. I also think his message to me would be for me to turn my life around before it is too late. I also think he would tell me life is too short for me to be doing things I am doing and that I should treasure my time on earth with my loved ones and the people who care about me.

- Josh

From The Beat: These are both beautiful messages, and positive challenges to us all. Perhaps you are familiar with the expression, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me."

I Love You Baby Girl

The last time I said "I love you" was to my girlfriend on the phone in juvenile hall. I meant this because me and her been thru so much that I started to love her and have love for her. She treated me like no other girl has. At first, she was just one of them other...as we call, "breezy"... but after awhile, I can see that she was unique and I couldn't let this girl leave me. I had to keep her because she made me feel special like no other girl and she showed me real love.

- Billy

From The Beat: We are so happy for you that you have found love. Now that you are beginning an adult relationship, what changes can you make in your life to show her respect through being a stable, responsible partner? This is something to think about some more before your release. She wants you to be healthy and by her side.

Change A Mind

People say I am not gonna ever change
But if the money is right

Then my whole life gon' be rearranged.

I like how people say

I am not capable of doing what I am supposed to do

But when I proved them wrong

I make them wear a pink thong.

Money come quick wear I am from,

But I am tired of this life

'Cause you gotta use a gun,

no matter what you gone have problem

and if you a real ninja you gone solve them.

That's why it's called a changed life.

-Marco

From the Beat: Keep this poem, because it's like your calling card and your answer to every person that ever loses faith in you. Not only that, maybe if you start to waver and lose sight of your path you can read this and it will help you remember your true goals! The Beat believes in you!

The Cheating Life

I cheated all my life in a sense. Sometimes I cheated in school, sometimes I cheated to get money.... but I always cheated in relationships. I don't know why, I just do. (I would say did, but I still do). I tried to be faithful then I got cheated on, so I was just like screw it!! So now I'm a slutbag... a proud, glorified straight slutbucket!! And I be cheatin' on video games.

- G-Baby

From The Beat: Is there some satisfaction to be gained from not cheating on yourself? For instance, if you beat a video game without looking up the solutions, or do good on a test? Is it less fun/rewarding when you cheat? As far as relationships go, some people say its ok to be a "free agent" as long as you're open and honest about what you do.

Shame On Me

I once cheated on my baby mama when she was in the hospital having our baby and I almost missed my little girl coming into the world. I would have been mad that I didn't see her first cry, all because I wanted to be stupid and have sex with this virgin who liked me. She knew I was about to have a kid but she didn't care 'cause she trusted me.

- A Real Cheat

From The Beat: Even though you feel bad about the choice you made that day, you can be a great father to your little girl now, when it counts the most. Put this bad decision behind you and do right by them now.

I love you

You love me
Loving someone with a passion
The feeling that puts butterflies
In your stomach.
Oh... how just the thought
Of the person sends chills
Down your spine
Saying that person's name
Makes you weak in the knees.
Racing heartbeats
Wandering thoughts
I love you
You love me
A hug where the scent of your
Lover lingers
A smile that makes your
Day all right.
A kiss that leaves your cheek
Beggin' for more...
Oh... what love can do
When it drives you crazy
To be away from them
For more than a minute.

-Cs

From The Beat: Wow, we could picture this as a song, if someone would just write a melody for them. But is it describing deep love, or just infatuation? And what is actually the difference between the two?

Hard Time To Do

So like cheating and getting away is some time hard to do, 'cause if someone really loves you they won't cheat on you, but there is a 50% chance they will cheat on you. Because you did her wrong, she will cheat on you. And I will too, 'cause I know she did, so I did it.

- Jewel

From The Beat: Did it break the trust between you? If you could start fresh, either with her or someone new, would you avoid cheating? How can cheating be avoided?

If He Came Back To Earth

My patna got shot six times. If he came back, he probably try and be peaceful and stop the violence. He might be mad at me for the dumb choices I made.

- Reggie

From The Beat: How can you honor his memory in your life choices, when you get released? Stop making dumb ones!!

I Remember

The last time I said "I love you" to someone was August 10, 2007, and I really meant it. Who I said it to is my soon-to-be wife. Her name is Alicia, and I think we really have something for each other, but she's probably mad at me right now 'cause I'm in here. I will explain my self over and over again.

- Tarell

From The Beat: Yes, she is probably going to want some answers. Here are some things you can think about now, to get ready for that conversation: How can I avoid getting locked up again? What does it mean to me to be a husband? Can I provide for my wife in a safe and legal way? What do I want in the future? These are things that all of us should think about before getting married.

All The Wrong Places

Have you ever met a boy who was always trying to find true love but always looked in the wrong places? It was one girl who tried to tell the boy that she loved him but he didn't want to feel it that she was in love with him

So one day she wrote a note to him and said, "I am here for you So won't you give me a try. I promise that I will be w that I will be with you forever. So every time I see you , you always see a girl who thinks she is the one for you. Then when she leaves your life, you realize she was never there for you. It's just reality for you to give somebody a chance to love you that really means it.

But if you don't like me that's OK. I'm going to be your friend for life. Forever yours.

-Baby D

From The Beat: It sounds like the girl may also be looking for love in the wrong place, if she's looking for it from a boy who can't or won't appreciate her for who she is. Sometimes it happens like this, it's nobody's fault but we can't guarantee that the other person will return our feelings. Maybe the girl in this story should move on till she finds someone who IS capable of returning her love?

It's Gettin' Too Hard

I have been here for two and a half months waitin' to go to a group home.

The first group home that came to interview me didn't accept me. Neither did the second one, but the third one did accept me, but something came up the day I was supposed to leave. The program called here at Juvenile Hall and said that they no longer wanted me to come to their group home because someone wrote me a letter sayin' some nasty stuff.

But then I got another interview and they accepted me. And now I'm waitin' for a bed, but I been waitin' three weeks so far and it's gettin' too hard...because my probation office keeps tellin' me that I'm goin' to leave every week. But it's gettin' too hard for me. I just want to do my program so I can go home. I'm ready to change now I been bangin' for so long -- I really need to stop that stuff 'cause it's getting' too hard.

-NuNu

From The Beat: Yeah, it's like the word "banging" took on a whole new meaning, because you've literally been banging your head against the system walls. We're glad you got a placement, and we're waiting for that first letter to The Beat Without, letting us know how you're doing over there? Use us to release stress!

Cast the Dark Out

In your mind you might think that it's love
Between you and me
Love is not a painful bloody mess
Step inside my house of death
If you're brave enough to take my test
Come in and face your death
If you pass my gruesome test
I'll allow your heart to rest
If you wannabe my man you gotta
Say I love you too
And when you do it'll go dark
Light some castles and cast the dark out.

-Dark Destiny

From The Beat: The love of this poem is dark and spooky and a little bit dangerous, like an old English castle that has ghosts in it! Is this how you think love usually is? Mixed with some danger?

Mr. Romantic's Thoughts on Love

What does love really mean?
Love is such a strong emotion.
How do you really know when you love someone?
Besides your family how can you put someone to such a high degree?
Does anyone really know a proper time to say "I love you?"
Do you believe in love at first sight?
You never know till you actually experience it.

-Romantic

From The Beat: These questions show that you understand how profound and mysterious true love really will. Do you think that when you find it, you'll recognize it? Do YOU believe in love at first sight?

If He Came Back To Earth

If my Cell came back to earth, I would be happy. The block would be happy too. I wouldn't be in the position that I am now. Maybe I would still be doing wrong 'cause we was both doing wrong 'till this day.

- Tie

From The Beat: If getting locked up and losing a friend doesn't make you want to change your ways of doing wrong, what will? Do you see another way? Can you reach out to someone for advice?

Platonic Love

The last time I said "I love you" to somebody
It was today and I said I love you
To my mother
Before I got off the phone with her
And the words I said to her was
"Mommy I love you, and I'll talk to you later."
Which is a child's love for her mother.

-Somegirl

From The Beat: The first love we ever feel is the love we feel for our mothers, because for the first part of our life, it is they who keep us alive and nurture us. No matter how things end up with family drama, they are still the ones who bring us into this world - and this short free verse poem is the perfect reminder of that love. Keep writing!

This God

If God came to earth, the world would be a different place
If he came back He'd be happy, 'cause things would change.
The crimes wouldn't be going on.
Things would be different.
There would be less poor people.
Everybody would be happy and everything would be going right with everybody
He would give people hope and everybody would have a happy life.

- Kyndal

From The Beat: Sounds to us like your God would change the way the world is going today. That's huge. How would He do that? Seriously.

Step Yo' Game Up

You think I don't know
Yet I know the deal
Yo' game ain't sealed
You think it's tight?
But it's loose
Like that broken chain
On your bike.
I will never be your wife.
Come to think about it
You'll never own a housewife
I'm a throw you away 'like that broken kite
Step yo' game up
'Cause you ain't tight

-Big Head Jen

From The Beat: Now that's the flip side of love for sure. All those metaphors, between the chain and the kite, remind us of one thing: Never cross a powerful poet, 'cause she'll get you with her rhymes!

Tattoo Removal

Do you want to get tattoos? Well if you do I hope you get them in a place you can cover and it's something you won't regret.

Me, I have tattoos and now I'm getting them removed. Like everyone says it hurts worse than getting it and it's true. It's a very painful process. If the tats are gang related, the program removes them for free.

What's the point of getting a tattoo if your going to get them removed? Think twice before getting your tattoos because you might regret them later on in life.

- Convict

From The Beat: Again, we know you speak from experience. Hard lessons. In the end, you will be happy with your choices.

The School Cheat

I cheated a lot.
I cheated on test, because it felt like the easy way to get the test over with
it's not hard to cheat I usually try to sit next to someone who does good in the class,
then I usually get a good grade on the test.
Usually I find myself cheating in social studies, because I don't like social studies.
Also, me and my friend cheat off of each other.
If he doesn't know the answer and I do, I let him see, and vice versa.
This usually happens in math.

- Kenyon

From The Beat: You're not alone when it comes to cheating, but in the end, this is only going to hurt you. Time is now to step up and get help in understanding math and social studies!

Cheated

Have you ever been cheated out of something, because of the color of your skin, where you live and how you carry yourself. I have many times.

- Masih

From The Beat: Tell us more how you have been cheated, due to the color of your skin and the way you carry yourself? How are you perceived?

Love

Love, what is it to you...
Is it something you want to say
Until your face turns blue?
Love so simple to say
Even when thoughts are still gray
The thoughts of butterflies
Starin' into that special other's eyes.
Sweet romance
The first and last dance
Sweet love
The special person you place above.
Sweet scent of sex
Kissin' each other's neck
What is love? A Four-letter word
That could sometimes hurt
Love
What is love?

-Love Big Head Jen

From The Beat: Love - the romantic kind - definitely has all these things in it... but the kind that lasts also has a lot of trust, and confidence and a deep down feeling that the other person has your back, no matter what. We'd love to see your talents put to the page to describe that love too!

I Love You"

I love you daisie with all my heart.
I wish I could be with you right now.
I daydream about you.
I think about you all day long.
I don't care if people call me a cupcake
or what they say- like she's out there cheating on me,
she's playing me, she's not going to be faithful.
That was one of the topics tonight, it was cheating.
I'm not even trippin' off her because she loves me and
she cares about me.
I know she's doing good out there and she won't lie to
me
I love her and she loves me
I love you daisie.

- Daisie's Man

From The Beat: Love is in the air. We wish you the best in your relationship. If you really want to hold on to her, get out of jail and do something with your young life! Go to school!

The Message

If god came back to earth truthfully I would ask for
power and ask for Him to wash my sins away for all the
dumb things I did in life because maybe I didn't mean to
do them. God's message would be to me do better in life
'cause that's all you could say, it's up to me to change my
life, nobody else can, plus if He came back most likely
their would be no mistakes specially with me.

- Jon Jon

From The Beat: So what are you waiting for! The time is now to start improving your life! Get serious!

Getting Out

All I could think about right now is me getting out of this
place and just doin' my thing how I use and just kickin' it
with my homies and homegirls. I might get released soon
and be free how it was. I am I definitely not tryin' to come
back 'cause I wana move my life on.

-Savage

From The Beat: How do you move your life on? What must you do/ change?

Longing For Home

I go to court this Thursday and I hope I get out so I could
see my momma and my daddy so I could see my little
boy that I care about, that's on the real. I don't care what
people think, straight up, that's why I wanna get out really
bad. I been here a month in a half and it's hard up in
here.

- Bg

From The Beat: Connecting with family is nice, but what must you do to stay out of places like this? We know your boy needs you home, not in jail wasting time!

Screw what I say

We're in the Hall , no matter what I say
But I'm not gonna pay
For someone else's mistakes
No matter what it takes
I got sprayed for running away
Next time I'll stay
And fight
Instead of flight
My dad's pissed
'Cause they insist
I go to YA
So if I get placed I'll stay
I'm gonna tryin' to do right
So I'll stay with it and fight
But if all else fails I'll take flight.

-Kyle

From The Beat: We really hope you never get desperate enough to feel like running is your only option, because YA is no place to be. What made you run last time, and do you feel like those circumstances could come up again?

Terrified

You feel the fire blaze,
The ground can't hold your weight.
You reach out to grab the pearly gates
Who locked those?
Not from space.
Never again
While you see the human race.
nineteen angels leadin' the devil straight to hell!
Torment!
Pain!
What you see in here
You can't explain
All your life
So men
We played the game
Never realize that there's a flame.

-Cal

From The Beat: We feel terrified after reading this poem, because even if there is no literal hell, the metaphorical fires you paint here have burned many a young person in these halls. Now that you know there is a flame, does your idea for the future change in any way?

Why It Is

If my dad was around before I got in trouble. And if he
told me to stay out of trouble I think I want be and juvenile
hall right now. Plus, if I listened to my mom and stopped
running the streets with older people. But now I know
how it is and I wish I never got in to juvenile hall.

- Troy

From The Beat: Describe how "it" is? Tell us what are you going to do besides run the streets with the older fools?

Hopefully Free

What's good Beat this yo' boy Lil Paul but yeah I been in this thang for three months straight and hopefully I'm out on my court date which is 8-23-07.

I'm in here on hella dead time I'm in here for something I didn't do but it's good because God knows my heart. And I'm not one of the kids who start praying with they come to jail. I been praying for my situation because I knew I was going to come to jail and they put these charges against me, but whatever. hopefully I'm gone on Thursday with my female Shelly Bo.

But if not, me and her is still going to keep saying "Free Me!"

-Paul

From The Beat: We changed your signature for you - because frankly, until you break away from that association, you will still be vulnerable to the law, even if it's for crimes you didn't commit but your crew did. We hope you erase that association like we erased the name, because we don't want to see you brought down!

Cheating the Law

When I was on the outs, I remember I used to always cheat the law by stealing.

I remember I used to stay going to parties or used to stay drinking when we needed some bottle I used to go to like a Safeway or a Albertson's and go take like 2 to 3 bottles. I used to do it since I was 12 and never got caught.

I think I stole at least 100 to 200 bottles and till this day I still haven't got caught.

-Christopher

From The Beat: Well you didn't get caught for the bottles, but you did get caught for something, otherwise you wouldn't be here at all. So now that you've been caught, do you still think you succeeded at cheating the law? We only ask you this because we don't want you cheating yourself out of freedom!

Hurts My Heart

The last person I said I love you too was my mama. I hate seeing my mama cry of me being in jail. That shhh hurts my heart.

I hope I could get out so I could help her by goin' to Job Corps. I got faith in God that He will get me out so I could help out my family.

-Lil' Loe

From The Beat: The best thing you can do for your family is to get yourself together and succeed in life. It is every mother's dream for her baby, that he (or she) should go on to have a better, happier life. So by helping yourself, you will be helping her.

Cheating, A Way of Life

Cheating, well the way I see it is a way of life.

There was cheating before there was this world we have now.

In the Garden of Eden that goddamn sneaky snake was cheating of some sort. In this world now, nothing has changed. Every day someone or something is being cheated. It's a part of sin, and as we all know, we sin every day. People get away with certain things until the Lord says its time to get caught.

I've been cheated on, I've cheated people. But what you don't know won't hurt you. And that's just reality.

-Da Boi

From The Beat: You really think that "what you know doesn't hurt you?" Because, especially with cheating, it seems like people always know something messed up is going on, even if they don't know the details or can't prove it. It's hard to hide from someone that knows you well, don't you think?

Lightweight Happy

If I would of never caught my case where would I be?

I wouldn't know. I would be probably be doing stuff that I'm not suppose to be doing, making the wrong choice at stuff I'm doing. For one I light weight happy that. I'm locked up cause I think God put me here for a reason 'cause if I was out my family would be crying 'cause gang task called them and said I was dead.

-Vee

From The Beat: So are you saying that in a crazy way it's almost a blessing that you're locked up? And if you think it's true, it almost means you've got a second chance in life. But what will you do with that chance?

How?

How could you feel what's in my soul
Picture seeing your father dead at four years old
I've grown so cold
Without a fire
Stay far away, don't get caught in my crossfire
I feel like I'm sinking instead of rising higher.

-Jesus

From The Beat: You're not sinking, you're being tested. We are all tested by life in many ways, through loss, temptation, grief, anger. But we are also blessed. We bet there are people in your life who love you dearly, and the sun shines on you (on the outs). You can read, you can write, you have health. So you have a choice, to sink under the test or to rise and float up towards your blessings. It's not lost unless you give up!

Until We Meet Again!

Until we meet again I'm a keep your spirit lit, till we meet again I live to the fullest.
'Til we meet again I won't let nothing get in my path, 'till we meet again I won't give up.
'Til we meet again, I'm gonna treat each day as it's my last
Until we meet again I won't forget all my love ones' that's gone. RIP.

-Young Russ

From The Beat: We feel like this poem is that anyone who's ever lost a loved one will feel and appreciate.

You Never Know

I try to tell my mom I love her every time I talk to her, 'cause you don't know when somebody gon' leave this earth, you feel me? I lost my dad so sudden, so now I don't take my mom for granted and make sure she know I love her.

-E

From The Beat: This is very wise - a reminder that we should treasure the people in your lives with gratitude and respect, because nothing can be taken for granted.

The Last Time I Cheated . . .

I got caught up because I had a hating ass patna!

I was with this female in the hood with me for about an hour or two. Then my ninja was on the plane wit' these twins and he knew I was with my female.

This ninja told the twins to come to the hood and he didn't tell me. Next thing I know I see the twins walking our way they already saw me! But I tried to spin off but they followed us.

So I stopped and just let everything the females was saying in one ear and out the other.

-Kenneth

From The Beat: Ouch! Well you know, there's only one way not to get caught cheating... and that is.... [fill in the blanks]

I Am Tired Of This

I am tired of living life this way
 If you know all the poor actions I have displayed
 Hoping I make it to another day
 My life is filled with lots of problems
 Trying to find a way to solve 'em
 All I know is I try
 Lost so many friends due to drive-bys
 Asking God why our life is so cold
 Facing eight years so my life's on hold
 It's not fair doing time for shooting at my enemy
 Knowing if I didn't they was gonna get me
 Man I remember when this was fun
 Now can't go outside without packing a gun
 Now going through trial mode with pain and heartaches
 My own potna running his mouth, I should of known he
 was fake
 I try to do right but it's easier to do wrong
 Can't let this shhh get to me cause I am too strong.

-Baby Q

From The Beat: Man, your poems bristle with so much life and energy and emotion that we have a hard time believing you could ever be "life on hold"... And yes, it might be easier to do wrong, in the short run, but it also sounds like you are tired of all the long run drama and pain. So if you could build a new life with a new set of skills (besides criminal ones) what would you like that life to be like? The first step towards having dreams come true is daring to dream them in the first place!

If He Came Back To Earth

If god came back I think he would judge everybody for what they did since they was 10 year old on up. But me personal I think if we all repent and ask god for forgiveness I think if he was here he will give us a chance to start over. But if we don't, the people who just been doing wrong in their life he's going to get all the saint's and the other one's will go to hell. P.S. Just Keepin It Real...

-Jerald

From The Beat: Must god come back to earth in order to forgive us? And we're just curious about why you chose the age of ten. Are we forgiven for everything up until our tenth birthday?

Damn

Damn this shhh is weak. I'm still here in this hole trying to find a way out, seeing people get released and come back and I still haven't left to the next level -- where no one cares about you or anybody but themselves.

I'm seeing most of my homeboys start to go down for some hard shhh and getting sentenced years like nothing. Trying to hurry up and get to the Y -- not because I want to be there but I'm trying to hurry up and get away from all that ain't nothing but talk.

-Vee

From The Beat: But there will be all sorts of haters in the Y too, and probably a lot more 'talk'... so the real question is your inner strength, and focusing on what you can do to build it. Where do you find your inner strength?

I Love You

To my mom that I lost when I was three that I never had a chance to tell her how much I love her and respect her now I'm writing in this paper saying mom I love you and I will of took my life for yours if I had a chance. Mom I Love You.

-Rick

From The Beat: This is a very sweet and sad piece. If your mother were able to speak to you today, what do you think she'd say about your current situation? What advice and hope would she offer?

Look At Me Now

I am in a place where I don't belong
 But this street life is just too strong
 There's a lot of stuff that I did that I regret
 I try to blank it out and just forget
 Living my life in denial
 I took a chance of taking my case to trial
 And this is real
 Four years in the "Y," forget that deal
 I do what I do to pay my bills
 I spit these tips to knock hating ninjas off they heels
 That's just how I feel
 I can't snitch and take that six month deal
 But this life we live is so cold
 Ninjas respect you when they see that chop that you
 hold
 Then the phonies start to unfold
 All the real ninjas dead or in prison
 The biggest mistake I made was not listen
 Look at me now and the stuff that's in my face
 16 years old fighting this shooting case
 But in the end this is life, and there's nothing I can do.

-Baby Q

From The Beat: There is so much you can still do! You can get your education on in jail (just re-read all your work, look how much talent there is. You can use the jailtime to develop it and get more skills), you can keep reading, you can (please, please) keep writing... and mostly, you can look deep and start thinking about who you are deep down when not caught up in this killing and hating b.s. Who are you, deep down?

What If There Was No Different Races?

If there was no different races do you think
 The world would be a better place?
 Do you think we would all be able to get along?
 Do you think the gun violence would stop?
 Do you think all the continents would all be one?
 Do you think we would still be going to war?
 Do you think we will still be putting our potnas on white
 Tee's and hoodies?
 What if there was no different races, would we be in a
 safer place?

-Young Russ

From The Beat: This is a good - a great - question. What do you think? Is it all about race? Or is it about fear and hatred too? For example, in Israel the fighting is crazy even though the Jews and Palestinians are the same "race". They're all originally from that part of the world. What do you think?

The Words I Love You

The only person I told 'em I loved them was my mother and my sisters and brothers.

But other than that I don't feel it or don't get it from nobody. Or rather I say I don't accept it because it will get chu killed or it will 'cause you to get robbed of your heart ...broking deep down inside.

I think that I'm afraid of love because I don't never wanna get my heart broken, 'cause I've seen people do crazy things for the meaning of that word. So that's probably why I don't accept it or show it cause I don't wanna get hurt and it changes me to do something crazy....

But! I did realize that I do need love and someone to open up to.

-Lil' Corey

From The Beat: Maybe those people who did crazy things were doing it for a messed up feeling they THOUGHT was love. Do you think that's possible?

Message

If the Lord came back to earth in human form, his message to the earth would probably be to stop all the violence.

That's what I think his message would be!

-Kenneth

From The Beat: We couldn't agree with you more.

The Bottom of My Heart

The last time I said I love you was probably a month or two ago. When I said I love you it was in a platonic type of way.

The people that I said it to was to my twin sisters. The circumstances that led up to those three simple words was because I don't never see my twin sisters, because they live so far away. So I have to tell them I love 'em every time I talk to them, cause it's true I really do love 'em from the bottom of my heart.

-Young Russ

From The Beat: Man, now we want to know more. Where do they live, how often do you see them? How old are they? Do they write letters, do you? And are they identical, or are they different from each other?

Hate, Love, Confusion

If you were to travel through my mind you would see a lot of hate, love, confusion.

You would see hate because a lot of my friends are dead. You would see hate because I was born hated – with two strikes against me already for being black.

But you would see confusion because sometimes I don't know which way to go. Sometimes I want to go to school and get a job, but on the other hand I want to be in the streets and get in shhh.

But then I can't deal with the consequences of getting down – which is going to jail for life, or getting killed, or being a knock.

But anyways you would see love because I got a lot of love for a lot of people, especially my mom and two lil' brothers.

-Turk

From The Beat: It feels like your confusion comes from being driven by two opposing forces: Love and Hate (which translates into not giving a f**k). But we've known you long enough to believe that love can win. Go back and read the piece you wrote for your brother. Is there any hate in you stronger than that love?

Dedicated To My Baby Brother

What's up Beat, this is your boy Turk. I'm writing this about my little brother Antonio.

What's up Lil' Bruh? I just want to tell you I love you Lil' Bruh. Don't think I didn't love you. I was out, I just was doing my own thing. And I didn't want you to get into all the things I was doing. But you did anyways, and half of that was all my fault for being the brother I should have been.

I should have been there for you instead of thinking' I was doing the right thing for not being there. But I promise you when we both get out we gon' do all the positive things brothers should do. But anyways lil' bruh, be cool in here so you can get out. Stay strong and keep your head up. I love you bruh. From your big bro, Turk.

-Turk

From The Beat: Both you and your brother have been given a second chance, and we're so grateful for that, because if he sees you turn your life around, it will give him the push he needs to do the same...and between the two of you, with your combined strength, you might just beat back the demons that have been plaguing you both. Peace!

That Only One Is My Son

Right now it's only one person in life that I will give my life fo'

And that's my son, who I'm dying to be there for
Everyday I sit in which his picture and think of him
more and more

That's my heart, soul, and my dearly life

Having a son really change the way I use to think
One day me and my son will clearly meet
I imagine him running into my embrace
He really opened my eyes and slowed down my fast pace

No matter what nobody says he'll forever be my son
No words can change my way for my boy
Just knowing I have a child brings my passion joy

No man or woman can stop me from loving my seed
It's a struggle and I'm the one my family needs
I shed tears which my son pictures by my bed
Forever in life my son will be and my head.

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: In a world full of hate and stress, it's this love that will help you stay on track. He's someone to live for, to grow for, to become a better person for. And one day he will be able to read all the poems you wrote for him, and they will mean so much to him. But not as much as your living breathing self!

If He Came Back To Earth

I believe if God were to come back today, the masses of the people would not follow him how you would expect people to follow God. The Bible gives the example of when the people turned against Jesus and had him put to death, like John the Baptist. The government has always been able to shape the minds of anyone it wants to. Being God you would know how to reach the people although men/women has free will. The Bible says only 144,000 chose God but since we have more than 6 billion people, 144,000 is but a fraction we as gods people must do more to be a righteous people like Jesus. Jesus said be ye perfect as I am also perfect, but because they say he died for our sins people use that as an excuse to sin. This will not get our names in the book of life.

-Kyshon

From The Beat: What will get our names in the book of life? Do you think that we as humans, well-equipped with temptation and lust, are expected not to sin? And if we sin, what can we do to be forgiven, not by God, but by ourselves?

I Love You

The last time I said I love you was to my mom in the visiting room. When she visits me, I constantly let her know how much I love her and tell her she is appreciated. I wish my daughter was able to come here to see me, but my lady's grandma won't allow it. That kills me inside because I really want to hold my baby girl and tell her "I love you."

But I also think it would hurt me to let my daughter see me in these clothes in this place. I just missed her first b-day and I've been thinking of ways to make it up to her. One things for sure, I'm gonna do my program and get home to my girls: my mom, my daughter, and my lady. Keep it solid Beat! I love you Julia! Daddy misses you!

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: Damn, it's a shame your daughter isn't allowed to come see you, but maybe it's for the best. How old is your daughter? What's her name? Do you think you can handle being a parent or do you feel like your destined to be incarcerated?

What Would You Change If You Could?

Would you change the way the police harass us?
 Would you change the way our community is ran?
 Would you change the war we are fighting against each other?
 Would you change the way our young sisters is bopping from dude to dude?
 Would you change the way we use the "N" word?
 Would you change the president of the United States?
 Would you change the laws or our state?
 Most importantly would you change yourself?
 Something to think about huh? I know I would.

-R-T

From The Beat: Out of all these, what is the first one you would want to change? And we noticed that all of these changes are external, except that last one... so now we want to know how you would change yourself if you could? What would you want to change in yourself?

Showing My Love

The last time I told my mom and my baby mama I loved them was last week when I called them on three-way.
 It felt good because I know they're by my side to the end, no matter what happens.
 But I need to show them I do instead of being in Juvenile Hall. I'm out. Hopefully I get out so I can do my thang. My plan is to get out and get this job. I got hook up on one, so that's online then I got moms and sis to take care of my Baby mama.
 RIP Emmitt, Rell, Drew

-Isaac

From The Beat: You make a really good point in this - that it's easier to say I love you than to show it in action. Congratulations on having a job lined up - what kind of job is it?

This Love I Have For God

I love my God. I love him so much that I can't even explain.
 He is my rain and freedom. I love my God. You ask why. but it's because he tried his best to keep me out of trouble and he always shows me the light. That's why he is my loved one that I trust and care about.
 What does he ask of me? To stay safe and live to 65. But before I turn 60 I am gonna have kids, maybe two. Then be a judge, then be a grown man.

-Julius

From The Beat: There are many people who were able to change their whole lives around because of the strength they got from religious faith. When was it that you first found yourself getting in touch with yours? Was it in childhood, or in here, or with family?

A Few Weeks Back

My last time that I said I love you to my mom and my bra was three weeks ago.
 You know it hits you when you away from your loved ones, because when you on the outs you don't even acknowledge your family. You too busy runnin' with yo' patnas and it only hit me when I end up in jail because my mama she hellas sick and it hurts me because I can't do nothin' to help my mama and my brother, who is on the run, and is in the streets and I don't know what's gon' happen to my brother but yeah, last week I said I love you. That's all Beat.

-Young File

From The Beat: Plenty to think about, but given where you sit tonight, we think you need to address your situation, because you can't help no one until you help yourself!

I Love You

Man the last time I said those words was to my mom straight up on and to ma pops I told them these words the last time I got to make a collect call. I said these words from my heart because it is the truth, I do love ma parents with all ma heart and up till now and for as long as I can imagine that will never change 'cause I love ma parents. The circumstances to lead me to say these words were symple because I had to go, and me saying "I love you" to my parents is a natural thing for me. saying I love you for me is one of the most common sentences I use every chance I get to talk to ma parents say those words wouldn't be anything new.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You must feel lucky to have both parents in your life because a lot of people who are incarcerated don't have that. When you say I love you naturally, do you really mean it or is it because you're expected to say it? Do you think you'd still love the people your parents are if they weren't your parents? Could you love them for just being them, no mom and dad title attached?

You know it hits you when you away from your loved ones, because when you on the outs you don't even acknowledge your family.

Untitled

I love you... is that a true feeling do you really love some one? How do you know? Love is not what every body feel some people don't even know what love is you can't just say you love some one because you knew them for a long period of time that's not love that's just a good person that you knew for a good amount of time love is some thing more then that it's a warm feeling that is in your heart that can never go away because that's no matter what its always going to remain because that's nothing you can get away from you cant run from love its going to follow you until you truly love some one you cant fake love because if you can your not a real person to me. So just think about it when you say the word (I love you)

-Lil' Mainy The Prince

From The Beat: Spoken like a true gentleman. You speak as though you've never said the words I love you when you really didn't mean it. Is that true? Who's the last person you said I love you to and why do you love this person?

I Love You

Have you ever said I love you just because someone said it to you and you didn't want to hurt there feeling. I said I love you and never meant it but a couple days ago I said it to my girl for da first time and really meant it. I neva wanted 2 fall in love wit' a female 'cause love will make you or break you. I've seen some of the hardest motha sukaz fall hard 'cause they was in love, but I said it and meant it getting locked up showed me how I really feel, but freak it you cant help who you fall for. But at least I fell in love with a grown woman who loves my black ass back. Just the same. And I know she right their waiting fo' me, when I get out.

-Spwary

From The Beat: That's beautiful. Since your so critical about love, and probably for good reason, what is it about this girl that allowed you to openly tell her how you feel? Was it because you got locked up, or do you genuinely love her?

If He Came Back To Earth

If God came down 2 earth he probably would come see Oakland first. He probably would tell me 2 get ma life together and stay out of jail. We probably would talk 2 every person who believed in him and tell them what there role was and what they had 2 do.

-Unknown

From The Beat: Does God have to come back for you to change? What will it take besides God coming back (we don't know how long that will be) for you to stay out of jail?

Untitled

The last time I said I love you too is to my Baby Mama 'cause that's the only way she was gone pick me up from my group home. But feel me. I feel that way sometimes even if its not in person its on the phone. I be messing up though but I still love her.

-L

From The Beat: Well, we can clearly see you're not learning how to manipulate better while in there. Just kidding... do you always only tell people you love them because you want something in return?

Born Looking Guilty

I'm tired of being a victim of the system.

I was born looking guilty.

Tall and dark skinned,

I was born looking healthy

So many people tell me you'll follow your dad's steps

Told them I wasn't havin' it - I follow my damn self

Harness around my waist so in life I won't fall far.

But if I die tonight pray to God I'm an all star.

Ball hard. My family is one too many

And we go on for generations

Paper chasin' leading to an early death, never patient

Automatics out the window

Let me be gone, I've been waiting

For some time now and my times now

I've been slaving

-H-Two-Oh-Cal

From The Beat: We'd trade in your one proud talented voice any day for the 400 voices that lead you astray. But of course, it's about whether you, in your heart, are ready to believe in yourself and the power of that voice. We hope you do!

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Sorry

I promised to never hurt you, but I have and it's hurting me too. It's so hard to tell you 'cause I'm scared of losing you. I swear I love you. If you only knew. I was so wrong I never knew it could hurt you. I want to tell you 'cause it's making me feel like crap. I'm sorry I had to tell you like this. Cheated on you doesn't mean I don't love you. I lied to you 'cause I promised I would stay true. I did it once but I'm sorry I haven't told you. It hurts me, even though it was me hurting you. I think of it and it bothers me 'cause I know you love me.

I don't want to lose you 'cause I really need you. We've been through everything. That's why I don't want you to leave. I'm so sorry I had to cheat on you. I haven't told you about this. But I will, 'cause it's too hard to hold it all in.

-L

From The Beat: This might not be the best forum to make your confession in. But we'll honor your choice. After all, you're writing 'on topic'.

I Love You

The last time I said "I love you" was to my mom today, in court, when I had to walk back in and she walked out. I hope I go home soon so I can show my mom how much I love her everyday. I want to show her that I'm not going to talk back anymore. I want to talk with her more about how I'm feeling so we can have a stronger relationship, so I can hug her everyday and change my ways. And, just tell her I love her, more often.

-TT

From The Beat: We hope you'll soon be home, and working on all the things you need to work on. Your mom will never tire of hearing "I love you", though it will be sweeter when she sees the progress you make.

The First Time I Ever Cheated On Someone

I said I was sorry. I told her it was a mistake, cheating on someone I cared about. I was the only one to blame. I had all these things about who I was seeing and meeting, told her "don't worry babe you're the only one I'd be marrying"! I felt like telling her but I didn't want to lose her, so I held it within me. Later on the time came for my hurt. Karma is a bee and I regret cheating on my love. Little did I know she did the same thing I've done! But I know deep down in my heart it was my mistake to begin with. I'm sorry hyphy baby you are the only one I wanna be with!

- Lady joker

From The Beat: Now you know what it feels like, from both ends. They say that confession is good for the soul. We hope you and your friend have both learned something important.

Thank you for keeping my family and friends safe, and I pray that he is still thinking of me, and that he will wait for me when I get out.

If He Came Back To Earth

If God were to come back to earth, and stand right in front of me, I would have a lot of things to say.

First I would say thank you for always being there for me through the happiest times, and the hardest times. Thank you for keeping my family and friends safe, and I pray that he is still thinking of me, and that he will wait for me when I get out. I would ask God to never leave my side, because at times like these, I need him most. Always stay with me.

-Jasmyne

From The Beat: Gratitude is a gift in itself. You have the ability to be grateful. We don't pretend to know how God operates, or who or what God is, but we're impressed with your kind and open heart.

A Look

A look can be a lot. You can be just chillin' with your girl or somethin' and somebody might be staring hella hard. Of course you're gonna be like - what you lookin' at? You might not know who that is. It might be your rival or just someone who's trying to act hard. In another situation, a look can be good. You can tell if a female is feelin' you just by the way she's looking at you.

Well, that's my 'lil spill for this week.

-T

From The Beat: The important thing isn't the look you get, but how you respond to it. A nasty look isn't worth your energy to respond. Let the sour puss stew in his own bitter juices. You have more important things to do. If you imagine that your pride is on the line, you're just feeding the other fellow his dessert. Your job is to stay cool and go about your true business.

I Love You

All the lost time I've spent here in jail
Making love with a pencil, reaching climax through mail
I could've spent time with just you and I alone
I'd whisper dirty words to you while you shiver and moan

I remember the time when you said, "Babe, I'm sprung"
From then on I thought nothing could ever go wrong
All the fun days and all those passionate nights
I thank you for not evolving any stupid fights
You're cute and mysterious in your own little way
That's why I love you, baby, I'm here to always stay
Baby I'm serio, without you I'd be lost
Nowadays, true love is hard to come across
I promise to never replace someone above you
This is another way of saying I love you.

-Chuccy

From The Beat: We know that one day you'll be making love again, and not just writing sad poems about it. And when you promise "to never replace someone above" her, we hope that also means you won't put your own actions above her — the kind of actions that let the system take you from her.

A Peaceful Place

I wish there was a place where we could live peaceful
A place where there is no evil and the people you meet
are not deceitful

A place where you can roam the streets at night
Knowing in your mind there's no trouble that you'll find
A place where the only struggle that exists
Is lost forgotten dead and rotting in the past
And all the people are worry-free 'cause they found
peace at last
Can't give up hope as I look up and take a glance at the
clock
And realize there's still enough time to take another
shot

Don't know how many more chances will be given
To change this hateful world in which we're living
Let's get it done today not tomorrow

For the earlier we get it done

The greater the chances are we will end this sorrow
All hate does is arouse my anger and increase pain
That's why I'm trying to get this world to change

It's time to rearrange our lives

So that the youth and the future has a chance to survive

-Christopher

From The Beat: Certainly it is not too late to make change in your life Christopher. None of us, though, want to get in the rhythm of wasting time, and then turning 50 years old and realizing we've let the clock run too long on excuses. Seize the day, Cape Diem!

A Day In Juvenile Hall

My first day in juvenile hall wasn't one of my best memories, but I do think about it whenever I see new booties come into my unit. They're lost and confused and just don't know what to do, and are all tripping that they're here if it's their first time.

I was in their shoes thinking the same thing, thinking I'll get raped, or how bad the food's going to be or who's my roommate going to be. I was scared for the worst, but I gained friends and they told me what was up and I got with the system. That's one day I'll never forget.

-Meikos

Form The Beat: We admire the honesty of this piece. Do you offer to help the first-timers in the way you were helped? What were most curious about is why, when you were so scared of what might happen to you, you still allowed yourself to be taken by the system? Can you explain that to us?

On My Way

What's up Beat? How you doing? Hopefully fine. As for me, I'm coo' just chillin' in this so-called max unit. Hopefully I leave soon. I 'm going down south to YA alternative for 12 to 18 months. I can get out in 12 months if I do a good program and don't fight, which I doubt I'm going to do, so pretty much I'm going to do 18 months. But they can't keep this only brother down, que no Beat.

Hopefully they got handball courts over there so I can show them how we get down where the true handball playe's come from.

To all up in here, keep your heads held high. We all will be reunited one day. They can't keep us locked up forever. They can take our freedom but not our home.

Well Beat, I'm bound to cut out. Hopefully I'm gone by next week. Well Beat much love and respect Alrato.

-Bugzy

From The Beat: We hope you do your program successfully, and we urge you to avoid the beef that will only make your time longer and harder. We also hope you'll write us from there and tell us how it is so we can put it in The Beat Without section. One thing we want to correct as forcefully as we know how: Yes, they CAN lock you up forever if you give them that power by committing certain kinds of offenses. Tell the 3,300 men and women condemned to death that they can't be locked up forever! Or tell it to the 2,500 teens who are now serving a sentence of "Life Without Parole."

I Love You

The last time I said I love you was to my lady. We been talking for a while, and I really do love her. She's a part of me and I never want to lose.

The last time I said I love you was about three weeks ago. I haven't talked to her since I got here. I'm missing her too much. I hope this doesn't mess things up with her. I'm just too old to be making these mistakes now. I'm just trying to do my time and get out to see her, to hug and kiss her.

-Too Old

From The Beat: We hope this is the last time you find yourself locked up by doing something that made you risk losing the love you have. Even though you wrote on all three topics, we just published one because it was longer the one sentence you wrote about the other two topics. Next time, please choose just one topic to write about so that you can write much more about it. Also, don't forget to put down a Beat name.

Brother Love

The last time I said I love you was to my brother. The bond that holds us together is not of blood, it is made of loyalty. The loyalty that breaks you apart from your brother or brings you closer than blood in the moment that it's tested and remained righteous still through these hard times. I call my brothers (you know who you are) and I say I love you...

-Pelon

From The Beat: Some of those tests you talk about have permanent consequences of one kind or another. We wish that the love you speak of protected you from the worst of these consequences, but unfortunately, that is not the case.

I Love You

What good, Beat? It's Giant Samoa from the max. The last time I said I love you was to my sister, my older usos, and my moms and pops at a special visit.

Well, Beat, dat was the last time I said, "I love you." A'ight Beat.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: We almost didn't publish this piece because it expresses almost nothing. Read a few of the other pieces on these pages on this same topic, and you'll understand what we're talking about. We hope you put more feeling into those words than you put into this piece.

Tell Your Mom You Love Her

The last time I said I love you was when my sweet mom came to visit me. I saw that she tuned emotional and tears ran down her tired eyes like a waterfall that was just waiting to burst.

I got a feeling watching her like that, like for example, why did she cry? I'm just here for a couple of months, but hat you don't understand is that your mom cares and loves you more than you can think.

Everyone in juvenile hall is going home sooner or later, even though you might say that you will do a lot of years or months, so just say to your mom "I love you" when you see her that way you won't have to wait too long to let out those lovely words.

-Chueco

From The Beat: Not everyone has a good mother, but those who do certainly should offer her comfort. You are fortunate to have a mother who visits and cares. We hope you cherish her and do more for her than just saying, "I love you."

Jesus Is By My Side

I seem to stay up late, thinking and asking God why I even deserve to ever do time in here when I didn't even mean to bring harm to anyone. When I say my prayers at night, I feel Jesus' presence by my side. He's telling me to tell myself don't worry for He would be in court by my side and he will help me out. For He says I the Bible that everyone deserves another chance in life.

-Smokey

From the Beat: We hope your faith helps you get through this difficult period. You say you didn't mean to bring anyone harm, and we believe you. But if you harmed someone, even though you didn't mean to, what should happen to you? If you got that other chance you say you deserve, what would you do differently?

Much Love Homies

The last time I said the word "love" to my homies was when I was in the outs. My family means a lot and I love them too, but the second persons I care about and have love for is my boys. We've been together through thick and thin and always took care of each other like brothers.

It might be a while until I see any of them again because where they're sentencing me, but I just wanted to write this to them — a brother's love. I'll never forget what we all been through. Until then, homies, keep all ya heads up high and live life to the fullest. Only gots one life to live. Much love and respect...

-Viet Ox

From The Beat: What do you do when the love for your family is in conflict with the love for your boys? If what you do to show your love to the homies puts your family in pain, then what is love? Who do you think will stand with you in the end? And if you've only got one life to live, why do you risk losing it or the freedom that makes it worth living?

Saying I Love You

I have said I love you last week. I said this to my godmother. Her name is Corrina Moreno. I have seen and known her since I was six months old. Ever since, I said I love you from the bottom of my heart.

I have said I love you to my girlfriend, and she has said I love you back. I have cheated on my girlfriend, and she has cheated on me to.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You're lucky to have a godmother who loves you and whom you love so much. We're curious about the love between you and your girlfriend. When you cheated on her and she cheated on you, how did that affect the love between you?

I Love You

The last time I said I love you was to my family on the phone, to my love one in the mail, to my tia (auntie) on the phone, and to my little sister. Saying "I love you" comes easy to someone that loves you and cares for you. That's how it is.

I come from a ghetto life — meaning rough and full of struggles and little sadness. But I was taught to love someone who cares about you the most, and that's why it comes easy for me to say, "I love you."

To all due respect, give respect and you get respect.

-Creepier

From The Beat: You are lucky to have so many in your life that love and respect you. But besides saying "I love you" (which is important), how do you show your love? How do they show it to you?

If He Came Back To Earth

If my Dad could come back to earth 'cause that's my Creator and to me that's my God, He's the one I look up to. If He came back I think he would give me a positive message and He would take me away from the life I lead and introduce me to a better one. I think I would listen to His message and follow it because I know it would make Him proud and I always wanted to make Him proud, but I never really got to because He passed away. If I could get a chance to make Him proud I would and I'll be satisfied because I won't think I let Him down. Well, got to go now but to all stay up and get out and be someone out there.

-Loonie

From The Beat: Sounds like you know what your Father's message would be/is for you. How could this message be any clearer for you? We think your father could be waiting for you to respond to him. What will it take?

Unloved

Unheard is he who writes these unheard cries of
sorrow

Who's hopes and shattered dreams are all that wait
tomorrow

No other understands him nor do they take the time to
try

Unloved is he who writes these words anxiously awaiting
his day to die

Will that day be peaceful as he leaves this world alone
It is soul in pain never rests until he makes his final
voyage home

To him the stars no longer twinkle and the sun no
longer shines

Unloved is he who cries out for help with evident despair
within his eyes

Angels no longer sing their chorus, the bird's song gone
flat and dim

Late at night the tears keep falling upon his deathly bed
he swims

Without a speck of hope he fights, to find a friend so
dear

Embracing with all of his strength, drained of all
happiness joy and cheer

Unloved is he who wonders why his day of birth has
taken place

Even though he suffers so, so much
Keeps an unmovable and indifferent face

-He

From The Beat: Plenty of people understand you. More people in the world are unhappy than are happy. And, you are surrounded by other people who are locked-up in j-hall after living a life that has been unfair to them. So, your experience should not be a lonely one. And, you can help others see that their experiences are also not ones that they experience alone. Don't accept life as a victim.

The Arrogant And The Ignorance

People often think that life does not exist inside of prisons, jails and juvenile halls, however people on the outsides of such facilities are ignorant to the truth of what lies behind the walls. For Santa Clara Juvenile Hall and obviously the other juvenile halls privileged to participate in The Beat Within program have a life that is impossible to miss, except by the arrogant and ignorant people who choose to pass through our walls. People can look closely and see not only life, but growth.

One day while I was walking to lunch I was looking around, as I usually do, at the life around us and absorbing its positive energy. I saw this day a bird perched on a ring of razor wire. I was amused by the irony of what I saw. It reminded me of us. We are lively youth who love freedom, yet it was trapped in something designed to make a person feel afraid and powerless. People walk by us sometimes and say that most arrogant things. "Those are some more criminals, ain't they?" Effing arrogant bastards. We, the criminals were taught to become the criminals we are today. Not necessarily on purpose, but on accident. And by who? None other than the arrogant pricks who always believed us to be bad apples.

Well, thank you all for your ignorance. Ignorance is a dangerous thing. Next time, think before you talk.

-The New Age Philosopher

From The Beat: These are some very powerful thoughts. It's so true that many people look at people in jail and don't see people, they see crime. We think this is not only ignorant, but their loss. Anyone whose been inside your walls knows about the vibrant and beautiful people within them and knows how much all of you have to offer. How do you think you can remind people of the "people within the walls" in a positive way when you get out? It's up to all of us to show the lies behind the assumptions.

I Cheat

I've cheated on a lot of the ladies I met. I stayed faithful to one, but towards the end of our relationship I ended up cheating. I tried to stop, but I couldn't. I felt bad about it, but it was like something I could not control.

I look at it now like you don't have to be faithful unless you really love the person. I'm just gonna do anything like always. And that's cheat.

When it comes to my mom I try not lie. That's kinda hard to do when you don't wanna hurt someone's feelings. I only got remorse for the ones I love. And I will come clean when I'm ready. Sometimes you just gotta cheat to get by. Everybody does it. If they say they don't those fools are lying.

-Kapone

From The Beat: We think it's great that you try not lie or cheat, even if sometimes you can't help it. It is true that everyone has trouble controlling their actions, but the most important thing is that you reflect on them and realize how they affect other people. Also, it can always help to offer a meaningful "sorry" if you do something that you come to regret.

A Cheating Experience

The last time I cheated something was right before I got locked up. I was with my homie and we was shopping over in our enemy's hood when we found one of their cars with a stereo, speakers, Ipod, and best their wallet. So we went to a bank and used his card to empty their bank account that had almost \$400 dollars in it. Used the money to have some fun before I got locked up.

-Beaux

From The Beat: It's good that you admit to this cheating, but do you regret what you did at all? We wonder how you would feel if someone had some fun with your stuff. Think about your actions, before it gets a lot worse!

I Love You

The last time I said I love you was to my mama. I love my mother and it hurts to know that I'm not with her, but I will see her soon just two more months 'till I'm home. So, see you soon Mama. Love always, your son,

-P

From The Beat: It's so great that you can express such open love to your mom. We're sure that she can't wait to have you home and that she appreciates when you tell her you love her. How will you show your love to her when you get out?

Poem

This is a poem for some hyna that did me dirty and I'm just lettin' her know how I feel:

You use to be special to me, And now you're just a friend,

But I can't help but think about, the day it first began. I thought we really had something, I thought I had it all, But you chose to leave me lonely, even before I got to the hall.

You broke my heart one too many times, you broke it once too much,

Now you'll never know the way I felt, from your slightest little touch.

I used to love you deeply, but my deepest wasn't enough, You threw me out the window, you threw away my trust.

Despite the things you did to me, despite the way I felt Despite the hurt and pain you caused, I loved you without a thought.

I told you that you had me Baby, I swear I would've given it my all,

To see you happy and make you smile, was my greatest gift of all.

-King Styles

From The Beat: This is a wonderful poem. It's obvious that you've been truly hurt by this person's actions and that much of that pain is unresolved. We're sorry that you put your heart on the line and it got broken. Is there any knowledge about people or yourself that you gained from this relationship? Sometimes when we are vulnerable we can get hurt the most, but we can also learn the most.

Last time I said "I Love You" ...

The last time I said I love you was yesterday. I told my man that I love him. I really meant it. But yet today I was told by some friends that he is cheating on me. I really don't know what to do. I love him and I really don't want to believe that, but if it's true then that is his bad, not mine. I tried my best to make it work but obviously he didn't want it. But I still love him and always will.

- Payasa

From The Beat: You can love someone without being able to be with that person. Sometimes love really isn't enough.

Life

Well, today is Thursday the 24th and I wanna talk about what I'm gonna do when I get out. First when I get out I'm gonna go home and spend time with my family. Second I'm gonna go searching for a job. Then I'm gonna go enroll in school so I can get my GED and hopefully I pass on and get it. Then after my GED hopefully go to college at Foothill and trying to go in to become a stockbroker.

Well, I got five minutes left so Late!

-Don't Trip

From The Beat: Those are terrific goals! It's great that you want to go back to school and better yourself. How do you think you'll keep yourself motivated toward these goals and ensure that you can achieve them?

This Is Why I Stare

The first time I saw you, my heart fell. The second time I saw you, my heart fell. The third time, fourth time, fifth time and every time since, my heart has fallen.

You are the most beautiful man I have ever seen. Your hair, your eyes, your lips, your body that you haven't grown into, the way you walk, smile, laugh, the way your cheeks drop when you're mad or upset, the way you drag your feet when you're tired. Every single thing about you is beautiful. When I see you the world stops. It stops and all

that exists for me is you and my eyes staring at you. There's nothing else. No noise, no other people, no thoughts or worries, no yesterday, no tomorrow. The world just stops and it is a beautiful place and there is only you and my eyes staring at you. When you're gone, the world starts again and I don't like it as much. I can live in it, but I don't like it. I just walk around in it and wait to see you again and wait for it to stop again. I love it when it stops it is the best thing I've ever known or ever felt. The best thing and that beautiful boy is why I stare.

-Genelle

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, very evocative. It really lets the reader in on what it's like for you to be in love and to be with the person you love. The "world stopping" that you describe, where you lose all of the outside distractions, mental noise, thoughts of the past, future, etc, does not just come from being in love though, it comes from being in the present moment. It's a great feeling, living in the moment, and you do an excellent job of describing it here and making the reader feel like they are experiencing it too.

My Ex

Hey Beat with I'm just dropping you sis ome lines to tell you about the time I cheated and got away with it. Well, I cheated on my x- hyna and I never told no one because I didn't want to hurt her and 'cause her brother was from my hood, I also didn't want her to know because she didn't deserve that, she was too kind, so every time I think about it I kind of feel bad, but what could I do, what is already done is done.

- Monster

From The Beat: Well Monster you were just that, a monster, to a kind girl who didn't need that crap from you. It's good you two are no longer together, and it's good she never found out.

Saying "I Love You"

Well, I just want to tell my brother David I love him and that I have "six month life skills" to do. But I can't, because my family won't accept collect calls. If they did, I would tell him to be good. And I'd ask him what he got. But I can send him a letter and ask him that.

-Jesse

From The Beat: And you can tell him you love him in that letter, too. Get writing.

My feelings

I feel depressed because I found out my man is cheating on me. I really thought that he was taking our relationship seriously but I guess that I was wrong.

I for the first time was actually serious about this relationship. I guess that's why my mentality had always been "screw" falling in love. And the first time that I have actually put my heart into it I got messed over. That's why I say all men are wanna be players, 'cause they get caught up in the game.

- Payasa

From The Beat: You just haven't found the right guy. Be more selective.

If Jesus Came Back to Earth

Jesus - if you come back to earth I will be so happy and say thank you for every thing that you've done since I was in my mom's womb, and tell you that I am sorry for sinning. I know you will come back one day. Love, your daughter.

- Sotelo

From The Beat: You can always say "thank you". There must be many people to say it to - people who've loved you and helped you. You can say thank you to these people, right now.

Cheated On My Love

How should I start off ... Well, I found my one and only love at the age of 10. Since then we've been on and off. I stopped talking to him at thirteen, and a year on July 4th, 2007, he finally called me!! I had a feeling he would and he did, so we talked from twelve noon to three. Finally, he asked me if he could come over, so I said: "Yea!! Yea!!" So he was like: "I'll call you in thirty minutes." So, I was so excited. I got into the shower and got all pretty, well I'm already pretty Hahaha.

Anyways, back where I was, um, I heard a knock on the door and there he was: my love. Well, not really my love because we wasn't getting together at that time, but there he was looking all fly and shhh, like always. We talked for hours and then he left, but he kept calling me and telling me how much he loved me, that he never felt this over no female. So, I gave up and told him how much I love him too. So we ended up getting back together, going everywhere together. He would come to see me every time he finished school.

So then I went to a group home and fell for this guy. I thought this guy was amazing. He was funny - he was fine - and he just everything a girl wanted, but all he wanted was to have a good time. When that guy broke up with me to get with a new girl that came in, I gave up and I started calling my lover. He would ask me why I hadn't told him that I went to a group home. I explained everything, but not about the cheating ... 'Till now he doesn't know what I did to him. I feel so bad 'till this day 'cause I know I love him with all myself. Man, maybe some day I will tell him. Like they say:

Never leave the one you love
over the one you like cause
the one you like will leave
you for the one he loves.

I learned my lesson. But I hope when I tell him he will forgive me. I love you, baby - always and forever. That one and only girl,

-Ya Crazy Lady

From The Beat: Being young and away from your "love" and in a tough situation like a group home, it makes sense that another person might catch your interest. If your boyfriend really loves you, it seems like he would most likely understand. Honesty is very important in a relationship, but so is trust.

I Love You

The last time I said I love you to someone was here at the hall. I got to see my man one day. We both got a visit at the same time and he got to walk behind me 'til we got to our units. And we both got to say I love you before we went into our units.

- Troubles

From The Beat: We hope you get out soon so you can say "I love you" to all your closest friends and family.

Michael

July 26th, 2007 was the last time I said "I love you". I said it to the love of my life, Michael. Well, I haven't seen him lately because when he turned himself in. He never got to say goodbye, but I know how hard it is, because when I turned myself in it was hard for me to say goodbye to my grandma and lil brother. They started to cry, but I still did what I had to do. It was for the best.

Well Beat - that's all the time I got for now. 'Til next time.

-V

From The Beat: Sounds like you and Michael did the right thing. We hope you'll get to talk with each other soon. Do you write to one another?

Camcorder

If there was a camcorder in my head you would see the good side of me, like when I'm out, chillin' with my family and my friends. I'm usually laid back and quiet and caring then. I really like to help the elders in my free time and when I have a chance.

Now if the camcorder were to see the bad side of me, I think a lot of people would be disappointed in me. I can be very hostile and obnoxious and nobody can stop me. But overall, I think you guys would see a kindhearted man.

-Merino

From The Beat: Lately we've been seeing only the kindhearted guy, and we like him.

Cheating and Getting Away With It, Or Not

There was this time I cheated on my man because I let alcohol get the best of me.

It was a Saturday night and it was me, my prima Smiley, her man Wero and my ex Laughing Boy.

We were all chilling at Laughing Boy's pad when my primo Smiley and her man Wero disappeared.

My ex-man Laughing Boy started kissing my neck then one thing led to another. I had cheated.

The next morning when I realized what I had done, I cried it out to my man. He said that he loves me and that it's cool. But I wanted to let you know: Don't let alcohol get the best of you. I still love to drink but I don't let it get the best of me.

-Laughter

From The Beat: Yikes, mixing alcohol and hanging out alone with your ex is a sure path to cheating on your man. But it certainly sounds like you learned a lesson that people much older than you still haven't figured out. Stay smart.

Loving My Sister

The last person I told I love you to was my baby sister. She supports me a lot. She writes to me, sends me pictures, talks to me everyday on the phone. She is one of the main reasons why I need to get out of the system.

I've been in here, in and out, for the past 4 years and she just turned fourteen in June and it really hurts because I've never been there for her birthday since she was ten years old.

To all the little kids that think it's cool to get locked up think twice!!

-Asian Guy

From The Beat: Love between siblings is sometimes the strongest bond. We grow-up with them and we experience life along side them. If something is going to be a motivator for you to live the life you want to, let it be your sister. We are lucky if we have a strong motivator in our lives.

My Lover

What's up Beat? Well, let me tell you about my first love. It was a few years ago and I was a very young teen. I met this guy and he knows who he is. And I was with him for about three years. It was a long few years, ya feels? But it was fun.

Although there were good times and bad times. Well, I'll always remember when he told me he loved me. It was when he had to go to Puerto Rico and I hella missed him and of course he missed me, but we had been together for about nine months already. And he was so far and the thought of being far away and how much he missed me, he just flat out said he loved me. And I got all excited and told him I loved him, too. So that's how it went down.

Although we ain't together no more, I'll always love him and still be there for him through thick and thin. I love you poppa. 6.13.04 - 5.30.07: officially over.

-Princess Rissa

From The Beat: It is good to realize that even after you break up with someone, you can still love and care for them. You will probably always remember that moment when this person confessed their love - nothing can take away the power of that moment.

Lil' Brother

Hey Beat - well tonight I'm gonna write about the "I love you" topic. The last time I said 'I love you' was when I was on an O-T. I saw my little brother. He's my world today.

I'm alive because of him, even though he's only ten years old. He understands me more than anyone. I only strive for the sake of him. I'd do anything for my lil' chinito. When I get out my life is going to go through a lot of changes. I will show him the right way, since I've learned the wrong.

-Giggles

From The Beat: We love your last line. You can start making those changes today, right now, before you get out. Start working on your education. Read every day. Write letters. Make a plan for when you get out - a detailed but realistic plan. All good things start with an idea. And then the hard work begins.

The Last Time I Said "I Love You"

The last time I said I love you was the first time my heart broke. I was left speechless, with knots in my throat, as I cried-n-choked! I said I love you after 4 months of being together. She said it'll be a dream for us to be forever. I had smiles lasting for days. My world was high in the clouds, but soon did I realize she lied, and hid some secrets I found. I told her I loved her and she lied about her own feelings.

Why does this happen to me? It was all just a mystery! I remember this relationship but I wish I hadn't said those words. To this day I regret it cause now the pain still hurts!

-Lady Joker

From the Beat: You never know - it might hurt whether you'd said what you said, or not. It's time to move on. Keep your heart open. You'll be 'smitten' again.

That Special Feeling

Love is a very special feeling. I truly only feel it for two people in the world - my mom and Trisha. She has always been there for me, no matter. No matter what I would give her my heart and soul. I love her so much and I know I always will love her, with all my heart.

-Rainbow

From The Beat: We're glad you have two people to love. We hope you find many more.

To The Lord

Dear Lord forgive me for my sins
You know I'm trying to win.
You're the only one who knows my heart
even when I'm in the dark.
Amen

-Estephen

From The Beat: This is a simple but profound prayer. The forgiveness starts with you, and we wonder when will you will be willing to set yourself free? Also there is a saying that integrity, or perhaps we could say good character, is best proven by who you are when no one is looking. We can try to impress others by seeming to act right, but the hardest time to make the right choices is when no one else is around. But we think that may be the most important time of all. After all, you are the one who has to live with yourself when all is said and done, and God cannot be fooled.

Why?

I'm locked up they won't let me out
Once you're in the system you can't get back out
I kiss my life good-bye, I tell my family I'll miss them
I think of all the felony charges as they list them
But God has a plan
He put us on this land
With nothing but dirt or sand
To help us understand we ain't "united we stand"
Everybody has a race, everybody has a place
I'm just thinking of all the days we haven't got this straight
But there's a better place where there ain't no race
No tear on your face under God's good grace
Where there's stars in the sky
And you ain't got to get high just to get by
Just to get by I need to get high
So I look to the sky and I'm askin' God "Why?"

-Baby Girl Jennifer

From The Beat: Is the question "why?" or "how?"? How will you live your life with a plan-a future in mind-rather than just getting by? How will you respond when things don't go the direction you had hoped or planned? Do you have a plan B, a plan C, etc.? You may not have control over the consequences you are currently receiving, but you do have control over the choices you make and the attitude you take each day of your life. What goals do you want to achieve? Where will you start? To understand where we have been is most helpful, but to have direction is essential.

Who Cares?

My personal concern is my family. I want to know they love me and no matter what, they will be there for me, but it never seems to happen. It depresses me, it angers me, but overall it hurts me, so much that I begin to mess up a lot. In hopes that they will see it as my silent call for help, except they never seem to notice.

Every night I sit and wonder if they ever cared, they'd rather turn their backs, wash their hands of me and look the other way. I love them a whole lot, but sometimes I don't show it in ways I should. I wish my mom would understand or could understand a little better. She probably never will, or at least that's what she's leading me to think. I thought things were going good, but after the accident, I had a relapse into my old lifestyle and still no one is there to help me.

Only I stand alone with no one to talk to and no where to turn, no shoulder to cry on and no love to share. With that I feel that nobody cares.

My biggest fear is knowing I may be in here for the next year and my family won't even shed one tear.

-Desiree

From the Beat: We wonder, what would your family need to do to show they love you and care? Have you ever expressed these feelings and thoughts to your mother and/or other family? Have you done anything that has burned bridges with your family members? You may feel alone with little support, but there are people around you who care. Are you open to receive love? Do you take time to love and nurture yourself? To get the things we need we must ask for them. Have you asked those you care about for what you need?

Better Days

Better days will come
You don't always have to run
Better days; we've been waiting for that day
Until then all we can do is pray
Better days; waiting for those days
I haven't lost my hope
These days I'm living off dope.
Better days will sometimes come around
Better days are never really found
Better days, better days.

-Estephen

From The Beat: This poem is written like the chorus to a song/rap. Maybe you'll write verses some day! We hope that you will be able to kick the dope habit so your days will get better. The better days will come when you make more positive choices. We wonder how soon that will be.

In My Life

In my life things are not so good
I'm locked up in jail and in my hood
People look at me as if I was the same
They don't believe that I have changed.
Ever since I was a child
it's been hard for me to smile
people expect me to change just like that
but they don't feel the pain on my back
all this pressure I go on my shoulders
more and more as I keep getting older
but every day is a new day
all you can do is pray
pray that your life gets bright
but I'm in the dark putting up a fight
my life is like a puzzle; I have to put it all in one
but it's hard because I'm not even halfway done.
In my life it's not so fun
Because I'm always on the run.

-Estephen

From The Beat: There are probably a lot of Beat readers out there who will agree with you that life is hard and that change doesn't come easily. There are people who want to help you with your struggles. Are you willing to open your heart and mind to them? We hope, that as you pray for your life to get better, you also take the steps necessary to change the things you can in order to make it better. Keep up the good fight towards a better life!

To Everybody In Durang (Juvenile)

You were always cool. You made me laugh and smile.
I've known you for a while.
You always seemed to know me because you read my file.
But you never judge me.
Instead you try to help me,
because you care. Some people in detention think they have it bad;
That makes me mad because my whole life I've been sad.
Some kids say they are being tortured by you guys,
But I would tell you it's lies.
I wouldn't call this place jail
I would call it a place to eat, sleep and get well.
Living in Durango is where I call home
But I'm afraid I have to leave...I hope you like this poem.

-Estephen

From The Beat: We appreciate your positive perspective, and we hope that you have been able to use your time in juvy to gain perspective on your life so that you don't have to repeat the same mistakes that put you here in the first place. We want to encourage you to keep writings about your life and your impressions, because we've always liked your poems and the thoughts of all you could be.

Isolating Myself

As I'm sitting in my cell, I feel like I messed up. Made my parents disappointed in me. Lost my girlfriend because of the system. Love her so much and can't stop thinking about her. It's hard to deal with this. Got my family on my mind, my ex-girlfriend, and fighting a 707 case.

I'm feeling depressed and want to stay in my room, isolating myself from others.

Made the wrong choice, so I gotta lose my freedom. I am learning from my mistake. I don't want to ever come back. I lost a lot of things I love.

-Chinese Boy

From The Beat: Yes, we can tell that you have given up a lot for whatever you thought you were getting when you caught this case. We hope you beat the 707, but whatever comes, if you truly learn from this experience then it will be something you can look back on as a dark moment in your life from a brighter future.

My Mom's My True Friend

I said and show my mom that I love her. She is my mom. She took care of me, still is, and supports me. She's my best friend. I love her—that's a true friend.

-Lucero

From The Beat: Look, Lucero, we appreciate what you're writing, but we would appreciate it a lot more if you would take just one topic and write a whole lot more than just a few lines. If you choose to write about three topics, you don't give yourself enough time to develop any one of them, and that cheats us out of your thinking. Next time, just write about one topic please.

Lessons To Be Learned

Life ain't shhh but a profit to my pockets

So I play my hands close to my chest

In these streets, my main priority is getting respect
I make smart moves, 'cause life is like a game of chess

Panic and make vital mistakes

Lesson to be learned: don't roll with the fake

'Cause hollows fly they way

Every day

-Clapa

From The Beat: The profits you're making/The system is taking/Go back to crime/And they'll take every dime/There's another lesson you haven't learned/Play with fire and you're sure to get burned.

Life Is No Game

Life is no joke, and you can't think it's a game 'cause once you die there's no comin' back. I love life, but comin' to jail don't show it.

Shhh, I went to court today. The DA played me, but that's how I made my life to be. I could change it, but I love the 'hood too much. My homies got my back an' I got theirs.

But me being from my 'hood is not helpin' my life. It's really cuttin' it short. Things gettin' bad. Homies dyin'. Homies comin' to jail.

See, if I want my life, I need to change. But see, I'm Mobster Quan. See, I don't play. Before I die some of dese ninjas comin' wit' me... If I do that, my life is over, too. Life is no game

-Mobster Quan

From The Beat: You SAY life is no game, but you live it as if it were a game. We admire you for knowing that you could change if you wanted to, and we understand why you want to continue doing what you do. But open your eyes. If your homies got your back, why are you locked up? And if you're locked up here, what makes you think you can avoid even deeper and darker dungeons they have waiting for you down the line? You may be "Mobster Quan" (yes, we know we changed the spelling), but that didn't keep you from ending up under the control of a bunch of strangers. When will enough be enough?

I Felt Like I Betrayed My New Boyfriend

Once I cheated on this boy, like three days after we started dating. I got caught and felt extremely bad, because he took me to meet his mom, and I felt that I betrayed him. I felt guilty. I apologized, and we continued dating. He wanted it to be an open and honest relationship.

-Yanna M

From The Beat: At least you had the courage to apologize. Whatever happened to him and to your relationship?

Cheated The System

What it is with The Beat? Dis ya boy, Swiss Maka, and I'm back in dis joint again for the sixth time this year. You know how da juvenile system play game with you when you are a child. I've cheated the system so many times that it's a shame. This shhh come back double fold when you least expect it.

I got caught up on some dumb shhh with some of the thugs, trying to be a bully, when it's not even worth doing time for. I'm about seventeen and they already trying to charge me as an adult, seven months too early. They let me get out and I did too much with my freedom, and got caught up with something I didn't do.

I love you, lil' bra. Stay focused, stay patient.

-Swiss

From The Beat: Being an adult is not a matter of your chronological age but your maturity and attitude. You got out and acted like a child and now you're paying the price. Whether you're guilty of this charge or not, you have to find a way to grow out of the children's games you've been happy to play, because you're about to face some very adult punishment if you don't.

Provin' The System Wrong

Cha, dis yo' boy Co-B hit you wit' da no braina. The system really tryin' to play yo' boy. First they was talking about Walden House, but then, they changed my PO to some woman, and I really don't feel her, 'cause she tryin' to send me to Boonsville. But I ain't gon do dat, no matter what. I'm tryin' to get in dis grouper called Mary's Help. My PO ain't tryna mess wit' it, but I'ma take it to court.

But I'm in here, holdin' it down like I'm supposed to. To all da homies down, keep yo' heads up. It almost over and when da judge and da DA send you to a group home and expect you to run, prove them suckas wrong and finish it. Until we meet again.

-Lil' Curt

From The Beat: We hope you follow your own excellent advice and finish whatever program you go to. One thing for sure, if you don't do anything to get into the system to begin with, then they can't play you...

My Time Has Come

Wha's good wit' da Beat? Dis ya boy, Quez! My PO called moms yesterday and told her that I'm leavin' some time next week, and he told her that I can get a family visit on Thursday (two days left.) I go to court on Thursday, too. I'ma see if I can get a home pass so I can walk the streets before I get on that plane an' leave the state.

I been sittin' in the weak-ass, dirty-ass, stinkin'-ass, miserable-ass juvenile hall for 97 days. This shhh is gettin' old, fo' real. I'm tired of doin' dis shhh. Well, words are gettin' short. G2G (got to go)!

-Quez

From The Beat: Yeah, but tell us what you really think of this place... Whenever you get to where you're going, we hope you write The Beat so we can put it in The Beat Without and send it to you. Tell us what it's like where you are and how you're doing. Good luck!

Love

It's funny how we became to be...

Just you and me...

The moment I looked at you dead in the eyes

There was something of you that stole my heart

Time passed us by and we began to notice...

Our friendship was going to the next level...ha ha ha

The moment you reached for a kiss...

It was as soft, sensual, and tender

Now for days, we've been together fo' a long minute

It hurts real bad to know I'm locked up...

And you at a group home...

But what keeps my hopes up high

Is the times I'd see you and you'd let me know...

"Mija, te amo con todo mi corazon

(Girl, I love you with all my heart)

You my girl, my one and only, 'til the wheels fall off"

I know it's true, because we've stoled

One another's corazones...

I love you, mijo...

-Stephanie

From The Beat: Love is a beautiful thing. So why did you risk such a beautiful thing by handing away your freedom?

Missin' Da Block

I miss my block. I miss da homies. I miss postin'. I miss wearin' my own clothes. I miss my lil' bra, my lil' sis and my mom. Being up in here really got me missin' hella shhh. Dis shhh got me hella mad. Well, words are gettin' short.

-Guez

From The Beat: This place is not designed for you to like it. It's designed for you never to want to come back. Seems like it's had that effect.

Cheating And Not Getting Away With It

Say, if that person cheating on you and you know that person is, and you don't say anything about it, but they come an' flip it on you and say you're cheating, but you're really not. So, by him saying that you're cheating, you got your answer right there.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: You might be right, but if you already know he's cheating, why are you staying with him anyway. Seems like you don't need any answers if you already know them.

I Love You

The last time I said, "I love you" was when I broke up with Lobo. It was hard to let him go. I had much love and respect for him. We was tight. I got locked up, got sent to a program, and he cheated on me, so I broke up with him. But, hey, he ain't my factor no more. He's the past.

-Lucero

From The Beat: If you let yourself get locked up (if you gave the system its power to take you away), then we're not sure who cheated who. There are many ways to cheat...

Going To Change My Life

I want to get out of YGC some day, but the court won't let me out, so I'm tryin' to get out. When I get out I am going to change my life.

-Ricky

From The Beat: Of course you will get out, Ricky. Our question is how are you going to change your life? Tell us one specific change you're planning to make.

Bottom Line

I propose to you a truce

No more fightin', no more lyin'

'Cause it's time for truth

We've been strugglin' for a while

On this shaky battleground

But I need to be at peace

Within myself, as of now

I know your deepest darkest secrets

And it's time to confess

Because keepin' all that to yourself

Is burdening my chest

I can't control your anger

Or constant violent threats

But soon all that will end

Because I know myself the best

You try to put me down sometimes

You stand me up

Take chances I would never take

And at times, don't give a damn

You try to contradict me

When what I say is right

But, girl, you cannot fight yourself

We're ending this tonight!

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: We don't know who this is directed to, of course, but we like the idea of proposing a truce rather than a fight. It sounds like you are taking a mature approach to a problem that has been plaguing you. Like you wrote, you can't control someone else's anger, only your own. Good for you.

My Embarrassing Moment

When I was young, I was about ten, nine years old. My mom would never let me out and play outside my house. I had a boyfriend. We was young. My mom was at work one time and I was sick. He came knocking at my window and we was talking. We ended up kissing and when we opened our eyes, I had a big booger bubble. I was so embarrassed, I ran to the bathroom, got tissue, blew my nose, got tissue for him. But when I ran back to my window, he wasn't there no more. I was so embarrassed I would take short cuts back home just not to see him.

-Lucero

From The Beat: This is a funny story, but we bet it wasn't funny when it happened. We all have embarrassing moments that we wish had never happened.

If He Came Back To Earth

If Tro came back to earth, he would tell me to keep our punk asses in the house. I wouldn't be in jail right now. I wouldn't be gettin' in as much trouble as I am, in and out of juvenile, playin' with guns like I am, doin' shhhh that I wouldn't have thought about doin', besides playin' it on PS3.

This street shhhh is real and I lost too many big homies to this shhhh. And that's why I'm rockin' like this, 'cause I got too much anger on my shoulders, and I feel like takin' it out on anybody who ain't from my section. And my big bro, Tro, if he came back to earth, I wouldn't feel this way, but you know me and bra hit shhhh up. Cha heard me?

-Grimey Young Felon

From The Beat: Tro cannot be responsible for how you think or feel or act or react. That is entirely your own responsibility. And even though we can sympathize with what you have to bear on your shoulders, "takin' it out on anybody" can only add to the weight, putting you in an even deeper hole than you're already in. So think about what you want and what you do, and connect the dots.

The Last Time I Said I Love You

The last time I said I love you was to my girlfriend. Before she went to vacations. she came and she visit me at my house. She said to not get into any type of trouble. She said to put that on our love that we had.

Just seeing her leave, my eyes began to tear up. Not knowing when she was coming back put me in a worst position. When I heard that she came back, it was already too late. I got locked up and then I called her from the halls and told her I missed her and liked her, but I can't never say I love you no more since I put that I wouldn't get into trouble, and on our love. I'm still with her today...

-Dreamer

From The Beat: You messed up, for sure, because you put something else ahead of the love you shared and allowed yourself to be taken from her. When you say you're still with her today, we hope that means that you've learned the most important lesson, which is when you are truly back with her, you'll stay there!

Cheating

Yeah, I can't lie. I cheated, but not that kind of cheating.

I cheated death. I cheated death a couple of times.

Getting shot at but never getting hit or dying.

I say that's cheating because I did stuff to cats dat other cats can't get away with.

And cats tried to knock me off the track

But I cheated death and bounced back

And I'm feelin' betta then eva

Now that's a cheat to remember

For tha rest of yo' life

'Cause I know dat I will holla back.

-Young Nut

From The Beat: We're glad that you've gotten away with stuff without paying the heaviest price. But do you believe in karma? People who do dirt and get away with it sometimes find themselves facing painful consequences for things that they didn't do. And, as for cheating death, none of us ever succeeds in the end.

Trusting In Him

Simply trusting every day
Trusting through a stormy way
Even when faith is small
Trusting Jesus, that is all

Trusting as the moments fly
Trusting as the days go by
Trusting Him whatever befall
Trusting Jesus, that is all

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: We know that your faith can help you through this difficult period in your life. Does trusting in Jesus carry any obligations for acting in a certain way?

An Empty Heart

Yo, 'sup Beat? Man, yo it's C-Dubb. Man cheating... oh yeah, I always cheat if that's what you call it. But yeah, I had a few occasions when I got caught. They bumped into each other, start wildin' out.

But yeah, the one I was feeling broke up wit' me. I was hurt. Heart felt empty. So I start doing cold shhh to 'em and kept cheating from there, man.

-C- Dubb

From The Beat: So let's get this straight... You lost the girl you were feeling, leaving you hurt and empty, and you still don't realize that all the time you were cheating yourself! Wake up!

If He Came Back To Earth

Man, if bra OG could come back to earth, that would do a lot for me, because when bra was alive the block was different for real. We was all with each other, feel me. But when bra got killed, the block fell apart for real. Me and my ninjas start wildin' out for real. But if bra could come back, man jus' know that the block would be different.

-Hot Rod

From The Beat: We feel the pain over your loss, but we wonder how losing someone to the violence of the streets justifies even more violence ("wildin' out"), behavior that can easily lead to even more grief for other loved ones left behind.

Cheated My Parents

On New Year's Eve, I snuck out of my house and went to the pier while my parents were at Reno. In the morning, I had my friends come over to stay at my house to keep me company because I was bored. I couldn't go out, since I knew my parents were going to call to check up on me. I wasn't supposed to have anyone come over. I promised. Then, at night, I met all my friends at Embarcadero.

-Smilez

From The Beat: So, you were willing to risk the trust of your parents because you were bored? Doesn't sound too mature to us... Hope you had a good time.

Living Life

Living life is not right.

Living life you stay on a hype.

Living life means dressing tight.

Living life might sound all right.

Come through some places and you just might lose yo' life.

-Illy Ack

From The Beat: There really isn't a lot to this. We think there's a whole lot more to living life than what you've given us, just like we think there's a whole lot more to living life than allowing it to be lived behind four walls...

Cheatin' And Getting Away

I remember that when I was out, I always cheated on people and always got away with it. I remember one time I was in a bar with homegirl, and she was tryin' to grab a guy to go with her to an alley. But then he passed out on the floo'. He was laid out for a while, so I took his money and got on so, I had money for the day. I was feelin' lucky after that.

-Clavo

From The Beat: Taking advantage of the weakness of others is not exactly what we would call lucky. Are you sure you're getting away with it? We wonder where that guy is today. We know where you are.

Loving The Game

Love isn't what you see and think, love is what you feel. Love you have to feel deep inside, not just think you have to feel and think you love someone. When your heart is brokin', it hurts. So that make me think to never fall in love.

I love the game. The deeper I get in the more I go with it. So never trust no one, ya dig. I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: Unfortunately, loving the game can also break your heart. If you doubt that, read the many wonderful but terribly sad pieces we publish in The Beat Without by OGs who now realize how misguided their love for the game was — and are now spending their living as permanent "guests" of the state.

Bread, Milk, Soup

Lonely day at night
 Plastic windows and bricks
 Blocking out the light
 People yelling at the screen
 Looking for a fight
 We got dirty, sweaty jewelry
 Especially when it's tight
 People for the system
 Tryna make us right
 We go crazy in our rooms
 Can't even see a psych
 Opposite doors throwing up the signs
 We act crazy
 Like animals with no human minds
 All you hear
 Are a bunch of babies whining
 That can't even do easy time
 Haters talking; my slippers are talking
 County soaps are garbage
 It brought me nowhere
 Late night snacks I ain't willing to share
 Blessed wit' a family, wit' good clothes to wear
 I got to hustle to get me proper gear
 Now wit' a white T and khakis
 Ain't no purple sacks here

-Jason

From The Beat: You evoke very well the loneliness, frustration, easy anger that days of heat at the Ranch cause all of you. What do you do, when you're angry and aren't allowed to leave the Ranch, and have nothing to distract you, now way to expose yourself to a new world, at least temporarily, to relieve you of the numbness that the sameness of every day causes you?

Pain Of Losing

Pain of losing
 It's our way of choosing
 Winning felt good only for a second
 Played us in the mind; heart stabbed like a vampire
 Confident of our team—we felt like an umpire
 They broke our spirit, like a broken piece of diamond
 They say we family—now we beefing over sections
 Section 2 was can; some went different directions
 Seeing our defeat only brought us sorrow and regrets
 What is and what's not—ain't no time to sweat
 Mind was weak but we came out strong
 All they got was snacks and songs
 I admit we are jealous and envious
 Those are our wants, not our needs
 We ain't no haters, so congratulate
 We felt cheated of a tie
 We was can, now that's a lie
 Watermelon's sweet as we jump for joy
 After the mistake we felt played, like a toy
 We went from no hope to a team
 Our work was like blood in a stream
 Quitting was the theme
 We went higher than it seems
 But in the end
 We felt lower than the quitters

-Weapon

From The Beat: Very good poem. We're not able to know what sport all of you were playing, who was on which team, what Section 1 is, or what umpire call went wrong, but what hints you do give us, your Beat readers, are provocative. You seem to have gotten a scrubby team to work together, to perform well and honorably, but a bad call messed up your win, right? Your team's efforts weren't in vain—you didn't quit and now all of you know how well you can do in the rest of your lives, especially when everything seems hopeless, you can rally—and that's an invaluable lesson.

Life

I'm gettin' tired of this shhh that's happening in the streets. Ninjas out there tryin' to stop my ninjas from shining, but it ain't go work. I ain't go' lie—they took some of my souljas out the game, but they souls are still with us. They lookin' down on us, tellin' us to keep our heads up. It's go be all right. But their remains are not.

Dear God, let me finish writing my poem so I can remain hot. So me and my thugs go keep doing what we do, so we can remain on top. And I guarantee you that this shhh ain't never go' stop.

So I just want to say Rest in Peace to all my thugs that's gone and I'm a keep shining 'til I can't shine no more.

-Mike

From The Beat: You write that you're tired of the violence in the streets, but as long as your homies and your shining depends on trouncing your enemies and vice versa, it is never going to stop. If you don't get out the game and stay out, maybe it won't be long before you can't "shine no more," you won't be able to do anything any more, because you won't even know you're dead.

My Hate For The Devil

Devil, you strong, but my God is stronger
 You make me want more, but he suppressed ma hunger
 You used to be his music man, so you come in the songs
 Devil, you got no power, 'cause ma love is strong
 Ma body is the Lord's temple, so he use it as He please
 And when the devil possesses me, I drop down to my knees

I say a quick prayer to make the devil release
 His grip on my soul
 Yo, I fight to the end
 'Cause the devil ain't my friend
 The Lord is my savior, so I give him my love
 When I pass I'm going straight to the kingdom up above
 He died for us
 Why can't we live for Him?

-Mystery Man

From The Beat: Two distinct parts come out of you, in real life, and especially in your poems for The Beat. How did you learn to reject the devil, whatever tempts you, whatever wants to corrupt you, and put your faith in the Lord? Was it a struggle for you? Is it still? How do your homies, your family, react to your faith? You seem very strong and secure, so that's all good.

Runnin'

Gotta keep runnin', no room for risks
 No turning back, to see what I missed
 Mind is racin' to find out what the code is
 There ain't no stoppin' to smell them red roses
 Drug the caffeine, so I don't fall asleep
 Energy rush got me feelin' on speed
 But there's these hatas tha's tryna hold me down
 Maken me feel like ten hundred pounds
 Gotta force my legs to sprint straight forward
 'Cause if I stop now, I'm gonna sink lower
 Can't get attached, so I won't look back
 Without excuses, I can fully attack
 Nothin' holdin' me back, so no reason to stop
 Keep lookin' forward, 'til I reach the top
 Don't worry 'bout scars, just ignore the pain
 Every day I'm runnin', 'cause it's all the same

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: Who are the hatas that you have to run from? What "code" are you writing about? Who decides what that code is? When you're free again, can you just avoid the hatas? What is the "top" you're reaching for? Is that goal destroying you? Why are you thinking about "attacking" anyone, anything? Why are you running so much, so fast? Where are you going? Where would you rather go?

Why Things Change?

On the outs, things are changing
Everyone's leaving, no one's staying
Showin' up others in public, like a blooper
Makin' them seem like they the lone troopers
Where's the true homies? They was there when I was
out

It used to be about loyalty, but now it's about doubt
They say for true homies, there's only five
I wish there were more sittin' at my side
But I'd rather have one true homie than none
Who'd stand their ground, instead of run
To be serious at times, but also have fun
The ones that left couldn't step up
The type of people who make the group corrupt
So it's good they left and showed their true self
'Cause now we know they from the bottom shelf
But why things gotta change?
Why not stay the same?
Turnin' on each other, like the damn rat race
Too many ninjas two faced

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: It can be hard to accept, Lil' Hedge Hog, but your homies are mostly still teenagers, who can get scared, confused, who have to consider their own lives, so when mess goes down, they may think of themselves first, themselves only, not you. It may now seem like you're pretty much on your own. Maybe that's one of the hardest lessons that getting into mess, getting arrested and incarcerated can teach you. So maybe it's over for the drama of the streets, of the homies for you, except for a true homie, a real friend, or it should be. Can you create a life for yourself beyond the streets, when you get out?

*Don't say it, 'cause I can't bear it
I don't wanna hear it;
your words are garbage*

Struggles

I play the game right—that's the way I am
Paying government taxes like they're Uncle Sam
Pain of our family leads us to the street
Path of my hatred just can't speak the truth
So deep in the soul, had me searching for the roots
We accused like scapegoats—where is the proof?
We angry at society and ourselves, included
My soul leaking to the devil, like Ikido, excluded
Growing up, taught schools for fools
The street don't want to see me succeed
Like little spikes on my feet
All these reaper loads on my back, like my soul's to reap
Creeping on enemies, like they have my spikes too deep
Streets preach the game, like preachers in churches
Mama taught me the truth, but I never heard a word
We young, but we got a sword over our heads
We gone, you're home, got no tears to shed
All the dirt you've done—they don't even care
Stop playing yourself, 'cause it's just a mask that you
wear

-Weapon

From The Beat: Now that you're down at the Ranch, you're getting a glimpse of the underside of the drama you may have created, or at least may have been a part of, in the streets—the lonely days, the coldness of how your homies back on the block forget about you. Can you use your several months at the Ranch as an example of how it might be if you had to spend years incarcerated, whether you're an innocent scapegoat or guilty of whatever you're convicted of? Is this poem that you've written, that says your mother told you the truth but you didn't listen, trying to remind you that whatever your mom said is still the truth, and for you to finally pay attention to her, once you're free again? If so, will you hear her this time?

Truth Hurts

Struggling of no loved ones—now that's hard
Fake homies—you'll never get a card
Reading and writing—that's my future paper
I get money, 'cause I'm a money maker
Recruits in the streets, 'cause you the only taker
They love your image and your fame
When you locked up, they don't even know your name
They teach you the rules of the game
You know you're a disgrace and a shame
Bill Gates' a baller, just like Lil' Wayne
They call you a murderer—don't mean you' insane
I could help you—maybe I could cure the pain
Pain hurt, 'cause you fear it
It relieves you when you share it
Cutting school gave me Fs and Ds
Criminal mind in the city is so corrupt
Lit up these bricks,
We all struggle to the top, like King Tut
Busting on people like Scarface with his Tommy gun
A shot to the dome—you know you're done
Why do this crime?
I don't say it just to rhyme

-Weapon

From The Beat: You're asking the right question —why do this crime? Why do any crime? To whom are you addressing this poem? Who's a disgrace? Whose pain could you help cure? Regardless, your advice to question why (whomever) should consider not doing "this crime" is real, and now that you're free again, we hope you remember this poem you wrote and take your own wise advice.

You Need To Fail To Succeed

To fail is to succeed
But to succeed, you need to fail

-Chinatown Kangaroo

From The Beat: Very clever.

It's Life

I dare you, I triple dare you
Don't say it, 'cause I can't bear it
I don't wanna hear it; your words are garbage
My actions hit hard, like tons of luggage
Heart beatin', anger swoll, don't push yo' lucky
Money in a box; hurry up and tuck
Living life like each pedal on a bike
Spitting thick flows, like honey on the mic
We use guns like lazar tags
Suffocate like a corpse in a coffin or a bag
Violence vs. peace—you choose the path
Give me the tools; I'll be the sav
Future leaders fighting for position
Lock and load fat things wit' boxes of ammunition
People in the middle caught into situations
People you hurt; we got no remorse
Pain has paralyzed you like Christopher Reed
He could save you, but can't change you
You blinded by things, like Stevie Wonder
First time locked had you crying like Paris in jail
You got money, you got fame, can't get you bail
Put the key in the trunk, yo' find you a sell
You're soul's lost, like a coin in a well

-Jason

From The Beat: What is it you so desperately don't want to hear? Is your own mind trying to tell you, maybe even warn you, that once you're home again, if you continue to use guns like laser tags, not only can nothing good come of it, you can hurt or kill people, for what? And get yourself in a whole lot of trouble, much worse than life on the Ranch. So, what's your rationale for using guns? What are you going to choose—violence or peace? You choose the path.

The Night Of Death

In Elie Weisel's autobiographical novel, *Night*, death is the most important theme, because of the terrors and suffering the Jews in the concentration camps had to go through to stay alive. The pain they had to endure was gruesome. They also had bad living conditions and horrible lives, because of the separation from their families.

The Jewish people were on the train on their way to a new concentration camp called Auschwitz, so they didn't eat for a couple of days. So the SS came and threw some bread in the middle of the floor of the train, 'cause they like to watch as the Jews hurt and killed each other over bread. They were amused. They laughed and joked about it. So the father jumped over the bread and got it and was about to give his own son some. He broke half for him and half for his son. And the son wanted the whole thing and beat his father 'til he died, then took the bread and ate it. Then the SS came and threw the father off the car.

The interminable night of slaughter and extermination was filled with death. The Jews were only given small rations of food, bread, butter, soup and coffee. The weak who couldn't work were sent to crematories with the invalids. If someone were reluctant to obey, they were hung and left hanging for days. Women and children were used as targets for the SS officers' entertainment. The inhumane treatment of the Jews resulted in massive death. The mayhem and extermination was very tragic in the story of *Night*. In *Night*, the days were cruel for the Jews. It was like every minute they were closer to death.

The Germans had enough power to take over a whole race. One Jewish man died trying to get to the cauldron of soup during the air raid. The SS officers told the Jews if one ran from the barracks, they would all get killed. The Germans made the Jews watch as they slaughtered their race. Hitler influenced his people into thinking they were the "master race." The Jews allowed themselves to become miserable with their own lives, that's why they stayed enslaved. The injustice that the Jews suffered made a huge impact on slavery. If you give people over you, then you will never be free.

During the Holocaust, the Jews became a weak and dominated race. Elizer (Elie Weisel,) was beaten by Kapo Idek and he didn't fight back. Elizer's father became vulnerable when he stopped eating his rations of food, and said that it was his own fault that they were in the camps. Elizer, his father, and their people lost their will power when the started to look at the Germans as purviewing people. Elizer suffered from a loss of will power after his father died; he gave in to the Germans. The Jews were pushovers because they allowed the Germans to treat them like scrap. The ways they lived and survived were like the dogs on the streets, struggling to survive.

I think back on the book, *Night*, and I begin to think about the deaths. A lot of things died, not just the people, but beliefs died and the honor of a race. People started to believe that there was not any God. They started to feel weak and lost faith in their own families, and became disloyal to them. It became so bad that a boy had enough nerve to kill his own father and that is why I think death is the most important topic in *Night*.

And that affected me, because I feel that's the way some of my people treated each other during slavery. That's what they did—told on each other so they can get in the big house and work for the master. They did it so they can be above each other, but we should all be together. That's why I feel the Jews stayed in internment camps for so long it became interminable. They allowed themselves to become comfortable and didn't fight back, so they could be free.

-Donte

From The Beat: You really read *Night* hard and learned a lot, didn't you, Dubb? It's true that the Jewish people struggled every way they could to resist the power of the Nazis, but there were times when, out of desperation, they turned on each other, including their own families, so they could survive. And you're also right about how so-called "field-hands," slaves who worked all day every day in the cotton, corn, tobacco fields, of plantations and farms mostly in the South, who occasionally betrayed other slaves to get to work in their master's house, where the work was easier, they got more food, and maybe could get more favors from the master, like saving their own families from being sold to other masters. Can you think of examples in your own life, Dubb, where young men, women too, talk trash about each other, lie about and betray one another, give each other up, even destroy one another in the streets, to get what they think they want/need? Is it out of desperation? Actual survival? Or for just stupid reasons? How would you explain the violence in your streets?

Squeaky Beds

Squeaky beds don't know when they'll fall
Jumping Jacks, bye byes and worm crawl

These BS ten-minute phone calls

System is corrupted—man, I can't take it

Just got to fake it, 'til you make it

Music's always low—turn it up a notch

Iron's pumping, iron's rusty, muscles sweat, smell of
funk

(Counselor) can't dunk, 'cause he getting old

Gophers dig up the grass, leaving many holes

Deers eat grass in peace in the mist

Wanting to go to Squires—never on the list

Cut the tail off a lizard and start seeing it twitch

10:15—lights going down—turning off the switch

Prehistoric heater leaving us cold at night

Small wooden locker just way too tight

Writing all them grievances ain't making nothing right

Talk to (the supervisor) ain't even worth a fight

-Weapon

From The Beat: Things may be raw and basic down at the Ranch, but can you see any lesson in that? Maybe that the administration is trying to teach you that if you seriously mess up and go to juvy or, as an adult, jail, you can expect the mere rudiments of life and nothing more?

I Love You

What it do with The Beat? Me? Nothing. Up here at the Ranch, holding down for me and my squad. The last time I said, "I love you" is to my sister and my family an' that was hella long ago. But now, when I talk to them, they still say they love me.

Sometimes I want to say it, but I don't, but as I get off the phone, I go lay on my bed an' think about what they said to me. But now, when I talk to them, I am go say it back, so I could let them know my love is strong an' I mean every word I say to them. Alright, Beat. One love.

-Young Jt

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing that someone or some people you assume will always be there and there for you, like your family, become precious once you realize that you can't go to them, be with them, whenever you want to, need to, because you're locked up and away? Your family probably feels the same way about being away from you. It's part of growing up, moving away from them, into your own life. That can be sad, but you can also stay a huge part of your family's life, and share your new one, maybe with a wife and kids of your own, some day, with them.

I Love My Auntie

The last time I said I love you was to my auntie before I left the house. When I say I love you to my auntie, it means I got respect for you for bein' a woman, and that I'm there for you. There's' really nothin' special about that, it's just reality.

-Cuba

From the Beat: You say that when you say "I love you" to your auntie, it means you're there for her. But the truth is, you're not there for her now. So we hope that the next time you are there for her, you stay!

The Words I Love You

I haven't said in awhile
 Unless silent as I go to sleep
 Always going out to my love
 He knows I'm forever his to keep
 Vaughn is his name
 I just hope he's still the same
 And hasn't gone back to his old ways
 I remember when I was last with him
 I wasn't overwhelmed
 But was leaving to my mom's
 Said I love you, gave hugs and kisses
 Then I was gone
 That's the day everything went so wrong
 Ended up behind locked doors
 So to the one I love, we will always have
 Our special bond
 I'll be there till the end of time
 I promise to never be gone again
 So we will never end

- Kaelyncia

From The Beat: A poem well said, hold to that love and bond and help each other make a better life. A life away from behind the bars you look through now.

A Love

How many love notes and apologies does it take,
 how many more lonely nights do I stay awake
 and reminisce about the times
 that you would check out your window so we can be
 together.

Even though you're not here
 I try to pretend that you're near but the fears slow tears,
 I can still hear your voice through my ears.

- Alyssa

From The Beat: It's not easy to loose some one you love, and care a great deal about. But it happens it happens more often then not. The best thing you can do is continue on with your life, hold your head high and know one day you will find your one true love. As the saying goes 'every thing in life happens for a reason'. Never give up Alyssa.

Loving You

It's been forever since you've been gone. I used to miss you, oh so long 'cause you made me laugh, cry, and smile. It's hard to believe I was worth your while. I really do love you with all my heart and soul. I pictured us as a perfect couple. I will always love you day and night. You made me feel like myself. No ones ever loved me like you have. I miss you so much, but knowing your gone and there's no getting back together or having our special bond. I will be here for you through thick and thin.

- Cassandra

From The Beat: It's not easy to loose the one we love, but in the end of your writing you state that the one you love is gone? Then you state "you'll be there through thick and thin", is this person still alive or is this person gone from our world? Something terrible must have happened to end the bond you both once had.

Cheating

That image of you and her still runs through my mind every time I close my eyes. I can't believe you did this to me, after all we have been through. After you tell me you love me, you'll be there forever, and you'll never let me go. How many times did I have to tell you that I trusted you, and wanted to be with you forever?

That day I saw you with her was the day my heart broke and fell to pieces. I never thought that day would come. That day I saw what I saw, but no matter how much I cry and cry and wonder what I am going to do. I really don't know, but all I know is that you and I are done!

- Kristen

From The Beat: The grieving has come to an end, now it's time to back on track and start living again. That day will come again when you find the one who will be true and fateful to you and you to him. We all live our live with two choices, the right choice and the wrong choice; it's up to us to make the correct one.

I Love You

I said these words many times and only a couple of time I found out it was true. I never really found out until I meet my girlfriend, she was so beautiful and caring. She loved me a lot, I told her after a few weeks of going out that I loved her. I made a really good choice with her. We have been together for five years and we still love and care for each other.

The only other time I ever said those three words "I love you", was when my girl friend had my kids and I told them I loved them.

-Scarface

From The Beat: To say "I love you" and to mean it is two different things. It's hard for a child to feel that love when their parent is locked behind bars. To better express that love to your girl and child you should use your name, not the name of something you not?



Oh, I love you

The last time I said I love you I was saying good-bye to my mom. The feeling of being arrested in front of her just hurt my heart. The whole fact of my mom crying for my sake is not something I did. I feel some remorse every visit cause I know I disappointed her for all the shhh I put her through. For my gangbanging and drug slanging and just doing my thing.

-Big D

From The Beat: Maybe this should be a wake up call for you Big D; if you don't change then what you're saying is simply words and nothing more. Don't let your mother think this, make that change if not for you make the change for your mother.

I Love You

The last time I said 'I love you' was when I saw my mom. It was when she came to visit me. I really like to tell her that I love her. I didn't use to tell her that I love her, but I really appreciate what she does for us - me, my brother and my sister. And I really like to tell them that I love them, too, and that I miss them.

-Jose

From The Beat: That's a great beginning Jose. The follow through will be just as important. Sounds like your mom can use all the help she can get.

Free Write

Hey Beat. I'm on lockdown for getting into a fight. Well, I'm lucky I even got a pencil right now. I've been sentenced to seven months here, and my first month there is already one fight on my record. Damn! I've just got to take it easy, for me and my baby. Well, it's hard when you see the homie getting down. The first thing that goes through your mind is to fight. Well, I thought I would throw these words down your path.

-Jordan

From The Beat: We're glad to find these words in our path. We want to bring to your attention something you've written above. You said, and we quote, "the first thing that goes through your mind is to fight." If you train yourself, and if you train your mind, you can keep thoughts like that in your mind. You don't have to act them out. If we humans acted out every thought that entered our minds, there wouldn't be many of us left. Ask us, and we'll suggest some ways that you can learn to train your body and your mind, so that your behavior reflects your best thoughts, not your worst.

Gratitude

Sitting in a cell
with just walls around me,
thinking I could have been six feet
underground,
wounds on my back.
But there's a smile on my face -
knowing that I'm alive, to this day.

-Shanoa

From The Beat: To be grateful to be alive is a mark of wisdom. We like your poem very much. Sometimes, we can't avoid a dangerous situation, but sometimes, we put ourselves at unnecessary risk. We hope your love of life will cause you to minimize risk by minimizing risky behavior. Thanks for the poem.

Saying "I Love You"

The last time I said "I love you" was when my sister was in the hospital. She was having an operation, so I was really scared. So when I saw her I just wanted to tell her that I really love her. I also told my mom that I love her. When I get out I'm really going to try to do good and to stay away from drugs.

-Brain

From The Beat: Keep telling the people you love that you love them. And start loving yourself more. You can say it in words and you can say it in actions. The words are easier. But without actions, they mean less.

Last Time I Said I Love You

Well, I tell my hefa I love her every time I see her, or talk to her. I've also started a new family and I always tell my hyna I love her. I tell her I miss her to the sky & back. So, I'm always telling someone that I love them.

-Jordan

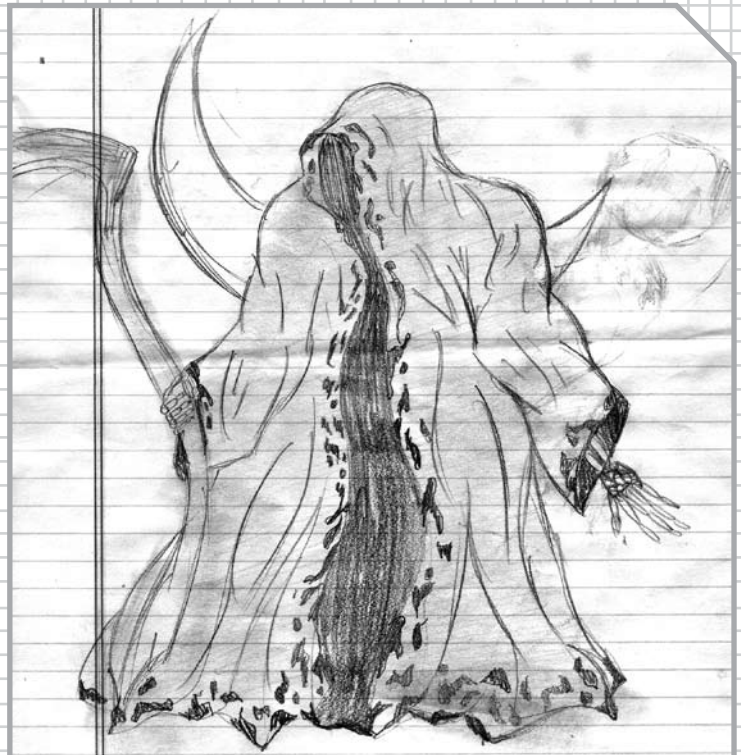
From The Beat: It's good to tell the people you love that you love them. And it's just as important to back up your words with actions. Sometimes that's harder to do.

Blue

Blue is the sky,
as is the rain
falling upon a snake,
washing away a tear of blood,
a secret kept from preying eyes,
like a souvenir hidden away
in the shadows, in the corner of a room,
locked behind a door,
where money is the only key -
a grave mistake we all have made.

-Aeron

From The Beat: Very mysterious and very skillfully written. You've got us wondering about this mistake we've all made.



Cheating Is Hard On The Soul

Cheating, damn, that's a crazy one. Well, check it out. I was with my hyna for about nine months. We were having some problems, so I decided to cheat on her.

Well, I was at my casa with another hyna in my bed. I was just kicking back when I hear my girl in my living room, talking with my hefa. I was in a screwed up position. I told the hyna in my bed that she had to leave. But, all of a sudden, my girl walks in, in tears. She starts beating up the hyna in my bed.

Well, my girl and I broke up. But now we are back together. I'm still in a screwed up position because my hyna is having my baby. Her due date is coming soon and I can't get out. I've been sentenced to seven months in here. So here is some advice. Don't cheat, because you will get caught.

-Jordan

From The Beat: Hey Jordan, have you considered that there might be better reasons not to cheat. Sure, getting caught isn't fun. But what about all the pain you cause to the people you love.... isn't that a good enough reason not to cheat? On the other matter, we hope your girl has a smooth and healthy delivery. And we think you need to be making plans to support your family. A good start would be to finish school. We're looking forward to your thoughts as the full reality of having your own family settles in.

Bondage

bound by truth
 bound by faith
 bound by hope
 bound by grace
 bound by love
 bound by hate
 bound by purity
 bound by fate
 bound to a rock
 that will never
 flake away.

I've never felt
 the freedom –
 I feel today.

*So shallow; never deep
 enough to dream —
 of a better peace.*

Close Shave

Fine – edged
 Razor
 of
 now...
 shaving away
 my dead skin
 and excess baggage.

A new man arises...
 only to
 die again.

And once more,
 I must shave away
 myself until

I renew again.

Filtered

Life is filtered
 to protect
 from realities
 that affect
 mentalities
 that are
 weak
 and can't meet
 the strength
 it takes
 to survive –
 to eat the
 cake
 and have it
 too

With two to three words per line poetry, this next writer conveys much more than the actual number of words. He's a veteran in writing poetry (he's been writing for close to ten years), but he's a newcomer in The Beat Without pages. He talks a lot about life and his perspective on it, so we're sure people will be able to relate. He's writing from Arizona State Prison in Tucson, Arizona.

Small Worlds

Too many lives
 are spent
 on small worlds...
 failing to soar into the great blue...
 small worlds
 where one is suffocated
 by small air.
 Small worlds
 with little thoughts
 and small dreams
 that amount to nothing
 more than
 small accomplishments.

But, I guess that's how it's got
 to be — for small people.

Sociology

I study mankind —
 the perks,
 the quirks,
 the constant metamorphosis
 as the hand clenches
 from handshake
 to fist.

So shallow; never deep
 enough to dream —
 of a better peace.

DORTELL WILLIAMS

When The Beat first started publishing pieces we used to have pieces where people would write words of wisdom. They were very short pieces, usually quotes that held a whole lot of insight. This next writer, a Beat Within veteran, uses this approach. Never using more than 200 words he writes very short words of wisdom. This week he tackles the subject of courage, which coincidentally enough, was just a Beat Within topic that the young people in juvenile halls wrote about. Dorte'll's definition is a firm one that persuades us to believe it also. There's become a fine line between courageous and foolish and he maps that fine line out perfectly. He's writing from a State Prison in Lancaster, CA.

What Is Courage?

I used to think courage meant doing stupid things; like acting on a dare. But that wasn't courage at all. That was just, well, acting stupid on a dare. Courage and fear actually sleep together. Having courage doesn't mean you don't feel fear. It means feeling fear, yet doing the right thing anyways.

We're always going to feel fear, whether it's doing something stupid or doing something courageous. The difference is that doing stupid things only reveals that we can do... stupid things. But doing the right thing, even when we're scared, reveals the hero in all of us. Courage (acting despite fear) is what heroes are really made of.

Dear Beat Within

Hey. How are you doing? I hope and pray that everyone who works for your wonderful magazine as well as their family and friends, are okay. I wish nothing but the best and hope that things continue to travel down the path of your choosing. I would like to extend mines to all of you. With that said, I would also like to get to the reason that I have written this letter. There are many, but the most important one for me is to give you props on such a good magazine. I used to read it when I was in the Halls.

I'm from Oakland, California, so that means I was a part of the 150 Crew aka Alameda County Juvenile Hall . I never wrote before, because I never really knew what to say. I'm now in the "Pen" and now I seem to have more than a little bit to say. *smiles* Ha, Ha, Ha. I guess that's due to the fact that I'm now in a place that's much worse than anything on "EARTH". Seriously. Especially, for people such as myself. Some say that I'm a troublemaker, but I just feel that I'm more outspoken than others. Ha, Ha, Ha. Now I'm stuck in the "HOLE" and light-weight stressed out. Being on lockdown don't bother me too much. There is nothing I can do about it. Time is time, to me. It's all about the same. They could put me on top of the roof in a sleeping bag and I'll still be cool, *Smile's* Ha, Ha, Ha.

They took away my freedom and that's the only real thing that matters to me. Feel me? At least I don't have "LIFE". I look at some of these dudes and be feeling sorry for them. You wouldn't believe how many individuals I have seen that are just destined to rot away in jail. And, even worse, some of them don't want to leave. Sad, but oh so true. That have just given up and now accept this will forever be their world. I look at them and refuse to go out like that.

I'm staying in a positive state of mind and keeping my faith. That's all that I basically have that honestly matters anyway. Feel me? Times can't be all bad for me forever, right? I've already had so many downs throughout my

This next writer used to read The Beat Within when he was in Alameda County Juvenile Hall, and though he confesses to have never written for The Beat Within because he didn't have much to say (we find it hard to believe that), he still kept us in mind as he sends a very honest and revealing letter to us. He's now writing from Corcoran State Prison and has a whole lot to say as he's now in the "worst place on Earth," according to him. He has dreams of making it in the music business and we don't want to discourage him because we believe he's got talent, but we do want to say that preparation is of utmost importance because the music business is a shady one. We appreciate him for keeping us updated and would like him to send us a couple raps we could publish. That's the best way to receive a Beat Within.

young life, I just know how the law of averages will one day soon be in my favor. I have to remain believing that when life seems to bring along nothing but a string of defeats and disappointments, I know that I've got to have enough faith that something good is still in store for me. With this type of faith, I can push ahead and continue to put forth my best effort. Without it, I'll just be forced to give up and accept whatever comes my way. All of my previous dreams will begin to seem like absurdities.

And, I have plenty of dreams, Beat. One of them is to get to get into the music industry and make something of the talent that I have. I know that happens to be fifty billion other people dreams as well, but I believe in myself and the gift that GOD has gave me. I have more than two hundred complete songs that's not counting all the verses that I write when I'm bored. I'm going to start selling some songs soon. Some people already contacted me through a few friends of mine's. I just have to wiggle out of this "HOLE" and get to a phone. If everything works for me. I'll try to make a small donation. It won't be much, but at least you won't have to worry about buying pencils. *smiles* Ha, Ha, Ha.

Well, I'm going to end this, Beat. I have more to say, but they are about to do yard. Only get that once a week around here. Ha, Ha, Ha. I'm trying not to miss it. Ha, Ha, Ha. If possible, could you put me on the mailing list. How about it? I'm light-weight short on dough, but I would love to receive your magazines on a regular basis, hope to hear from you soon. One.

MONO

Beat Homies

It's only me that vato Leija. Hope y'all hold on tightly to your time don't let the time do you at all, you got to stand on your ground at all times. Please keep your mind straight on yourself. I seen too many homies go weak in prison for stressing out, they now look like a extraterrestrial straight up homies, chale.

Well I'ma tell you like I tell my brother, sisters prison is no place for us at all. Honestly think before what you want in life 'cause prison you aint a nobody to no one plus you lose your freedom 'cause in there this is the inner world of the lost. Anything goes if told by CO's so do your best to stay out the system. I know it'd hard but if you put your mind in it, you good to go homies. I've been where you at not up there but Texas, San Diego well yeah I don't know if you know that vato Carlos well.

I want to pass this on to y'all what he wrote me and I want y'all to open your eyes up to this. If you in school always do your best you're only young once, so build your life and be ready for adulthood, if you out of school, then always make your money honestly, an honest dollar gives you a solid life with peace, without peace there is no happiness dishonest money only causes a person life at all angles all the shiny things that money buys blind us of just how weak our lives are shiny things have nothing to do with happiness, in fact

Writing from the Charlotte Correctional Institution in Punta Gorda, Florida, we give you a young man who's name stays ringing here at The Beat. He's written us many times before and this week he writes to the upcoming generation. There are ways that we cope with being incarcerated and everyone chooses their own way. Some live by the motto of do the crime, do the time, while others take it a step further and want to give back while doing time. That's how Leija aka Mono is... While he's doing the time he's consistently passing down lessons for us that work for him, or at least we're assuming worked for him, otherwise he wouldn't need to pass them down. But anyhow take more than a look at this next letter, calling out to all those who don't enough about their own lives to try and find something better and more productive to do then posting on a block you don't own one piece of property on.

it causes the opposite.

Being kind and patient and honest and of faith brings happiness well that what Carlos told me so here I'm here to pass it down to y'all. Everything he wrote and told me is the top deal look we only live life once so ask your self what you want do and be is it home with your female, male or is it being around vatos all day or being around females who smell like raw fish so what you answer well hope home so you can roll around banging your oldies with your fly female, or roll with your man while holding on to his hand don't you miss home huh.

Chale I'm out 'til my black pen bleeds on sheets of paper I'm gonna holla again if that vato up above allows me to.

Clearing My Window

My fate –
An unreachable destiny...

My world –
A single metaphor
In the vastness of space

My loved ones –
A devotion of confusion

My thoughts –
A grain of salt
On the ocean's floor...

My anger —
The result of my reasoning...

My hopes –
Desperate fantasies
Of a drowning man

My tomorrows
A constant preoccupation
Of my todays ...

My life: the result of all
My misunderstandings.

There are no wasted thoughts
Only wasted moments

Writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, we give you a man on a mission to give back to the rest of us. His pieces were sent to us via email from our angel (she knows who she is). Well, he sent a letter that we think is an introduction to his pieces by itself, so we'll shut the hell up and let him do the honors...

The Beat Within

Dear Friends at The Beat Within, Here I am, sending a bit of myself to you in hopes that life is a little less difficult for you all. I was very impressed by the writings in Volume 12.28 from the lady teacher and her students in Santa Clara. My heart felt full and content once I was done reading all their pieces. It made me realize further the magic of transformation in words/poetry, etc. It is my humble opinion that every sound and image carries a message. We must dig and dig to find it, and maybe we will find in it our point of departure or our destiny.

I am including an essay I wrote when I finally grew my wings. I've also included poems from my good friend and teacher, Pat Nolan, RIP. He was one of the founders of the "Men's Group", something I had the fortune and honor to have been part of. I've already cleared their publication with his literary inheritor, in case you decide to publish any of his work. So please feel free to do so. I have a feeling that just like he touched me, he will, through his words, touch others.

I will say my farewells now. Thank you, with all of my heart/life." Great pieces! We appreciate all your words and the courage it takes for you to share all of this with us.

August 2003

There is no reason
To reason
Or an answer to insanity...
There is only this
Words, and words on top of each other
Grasping to make sense
Of one another

I
Now as a man of twenty-seven winters
On this planet
Find hope tiring
The beginning
No different
From the end
Worker bee
Queen bee
Oh, there is a different echo to each cry
"Dream big" some say
"Walk on fire, and reach beyond
the stars"...
Take away my eyes
Take away my ears and nose
All that craves reason
For this world
For am I not
Just an unevolved predator
Tortured
With the glory
To feel human?

Mi dedicasion
A la vida y sus misterios
Es infinita
Porque yo soy "el infinito...:
My dedication to life
And her mysteries is
Infinite
Because I am
Infinity"

Empty Echoes

When you've been drowned
Dead in the
Depths of the ocean
Nothing will bring you back

A vague breath of light
Might remain burning inside..

Messages you might hear
But won't be understood
It doesn't matter
How much you're willing to fight
You're now
Only

A lost engraved memory
Inside some computer chip
There you will remain
Generating energy
For other generations to come

Deep in the bowels of this contraction
You will one day realize
That all those sleepless nights
Pleading to recreational gods
Only become
Part of the empty memories
In the vastness
Of this void

After a time
Nothing of you
Will remain alive

Putting It In A Different Perspective

I don't know how my life is going to end. I'm almost 29 years old, in seven more days to be exact. Eleven of those years have been spent in jails and prison cells. Never in my early years would I have imagined I was going to end up in this predicament. Lost amidst the million or so, who for one reason or another, find themselves trapped in the bottomless pit of prison life. The last eleven years have been by far the worst experience of my existence. It is bad enough that I am without my freedom and have to be physically confined to a cage, but this life has also chained me psychologically, more than I've thought was possible.

By any standard, at 29 I am supposed to be a grown man. However, sometimes I feel as if time has only aged my body and not my mind. It's difficult to mature and develop whatever abilities one might have under these conditions. This is because life in here is pretty much structured by rules on top of other rules, and it leaves no room for an individual thinking man to grow his own awareness, let alone discover the endless possibilities within himself.

There are the prison rules - which one may chose to ignore (of course there's always a price to pay). There are also the inside rules, those must be followed or you'll be dealt with, and that can mean a butt-kicking or worse, a good shanking, or...

There are a lot of charlatans in here who utter their love, loyalty, and respect. However, if one happens to break a rule, they are nowhere to be found when you most need them. Most, if not all, whom you've thought were your homeboys will turn their backs on you at the first sign of trouble, leaving you to face whatever consequences by yourself.

What governs in here is not a respect buttressed by a common knowledge that we all are reasonable human beings, and by talking things out we can reach a mutual understanding. The respect that rules in here is the kind that if I feel disrespected by you I must go up to you to confront you, ready of course to do anything to save face (even to take you out, or at least try). After a conflict such as this, there has to be an even parting understanding that I didn't get over you, or you over me. Even if one is not willing to take these drastic steps, one is left with little choice, because others will view the reluctant party as a weak fool, as an easy prey, no less.

Like I've said, who you thought was your best friend, or dog, in most cases will leave you to stand on your own two feet. The prison motto is, "it is your mess, you clean it up, sorry, that's how it is, Homie." Only a select few (this is as rare as finding water in the desert) courageous individuals will back you up 100% when you are in deep mud.

It is almost next to impossible to understand the whole spectrum of what makes this environment what it is. What I do know is that it traps you in a perpetual boy-like process of maturity. There's always an enemy lurking in the shadows. I've tried to no avail to understand my surroundings -- it's not an easy task. Everyone, it seems, must project a different persona. You can't show you have any doubts, fears, or regrets about what you stand for, namely your gang, your group affiliation.

It doesn't matter what color you are. Prison life and its strict codes mould you into something you probably thought never existed, an encaged, paranoid, mindless creature, who strikes first and asks questions later. A few years ago, growing tired of this, I took a good look at the face staring me back from the other side of the mirror. What I saw terrified me. I didn't recognize the man staring back. I came in as a lost, confused, wide-eyed 17 year-old boy. But this man, whose expression left me without breath, was not me. I refused to admit it - it couldn't be. His face, however, seemed familiar. It seemed like he was urging me not to ignore the weariness growing in my heart. Not to be oblivious and irresponsible of my own life. It was begging me to snap out of it, to take a journey into myself and recognize my faults and qualities as well. I finally realized, yes! it was me, that face in the mirror, asking the fool I'd become to step into this other realm to battle the beasts of ignorance and fear. I was ripe for this journey of taking charge of my own life. For too long I've let others decide my fate and as a result, I was

being pulled deeper into a black hole of total madness. That was going to be no more.

Now, by reclaiming my individuality, I knew I was going against all the established codes that held this so called society of warriors together. I was becoming the lonesome leopard in a jungle of predators. But I was tired of being tired. I was fed-up with hating other men for no reason. I was tired of thinking of others as weak, or less than me, just because they didn't think the way I did, just because their skin color was different than mine. This is what it is all about in here. Either you go with the flow or get out of the raging currents, because, if not, the rocks will smash you down.

I however, and in spite of all this, made my choice to stop all this nonsense in my own life. I no longer owe any loyalty to a cause that is pretty much based on lies on top of deceptions. On that fateful day I decided to embark on the journey of maturity. But I knew that in order to do that I was going to have to emancipate myself from the idea that I was just a faceless human, trapped in a web of utter hopelessness, oblivion, self-pity, regrets, hatred, pride and anger, to name a few.

My whole being has craved for many years to have something other than the patterned stale life I was condemned to live. During this time, I was also fortunate to have met a few good men like me, who are seeking a road to self-awareness. Men, whose own weary soul has led them to find others searching another way. They somehow have come together to form a safe haven away from the maddening crowd. These poets, mystics, and rule-breakers have dared to step out of the prison norm by creating what then became known as "The Men's Group." With these seekers I discovered that I was not alone in my travels and yearnings to know who I truly am. They offered me an alternative to the madness of our surroundings.

I was embraced as a brother, a fellow human being in search of answers. I shed my armor, and they shed theirs. I took off my mask and they did the same. Only through building trust and honesty were my eyes completely opened. It was as if I was for the first time seeing the people around me, not just their affiliations or skin color but who really resides within. It felt amazing to finally have given this other who walks with me a voice of his own. Because he's the one with a heart full of love and compassion, the one who's eager and ready to give, the one who doesn't resist the healing power of words. It is a thing of beauty to have found others who have rediscovered their own conscience. I believe that we are all (prisoners and free men) yearning to discover our true identity and roles as men. Why should I hate another man when I don't even know who he is? But in here, who dares to ask such questions? Well, I do. I want to treat others with real respect, not to view them as enemies to be wary of.

Of course, those of us who choose this way of life walk a perilous path because we have broken the sacred rule of "don't mess with other races", or "don't expose too much of yourself, others will use it against you." Besides, one never knows when a full blown race riot is going to happen or when you are going to be told that the man who thought you were his best friend needs to go (that he has become persona non grata) and maybe you're going to have to stab him. It's either you or him.

I, however, can't see the reason or logic of hating a whole group of individuals just because "that's the way it's always been." I refuse to be a tool of mindless ideology. I know my path is a long and dangerous one, but for some insane reason I don't feel altogether alone. Those men I met in "New Folsom" who have so boldly stepped forward (at the risk of getting hurt) to say, "I want something else other than this", showed me that there's indeed a different way to do things.

I now feel that I can't hurt another human being just because I'm told to do so. Of course, I will always protect myself from anyone who takes a step too close towards me. I am no longer blinded by the ideals and secret intentions set up to destroy our humanity. I've walked a long walk of hatred, self-loathing, grief, anger, shame, regrets, loneliness... and least of all insanity, to finally arrive in this valley of metamorphosis, where I get to be me - no one else but me.

There's No Beauty In Prison Walls

There is no beauty in prison walls
There is no greater fault
Than believing a greater tomorrow
Will evolve
Out of the ashes
Of our wasted hopes

Countless hours
Are spent
In futile fantasies
Of what ifs
And maybes

Life progresses
Into a disappearing shadow
Leaving nothing
But bewilderment
Behind
I believe
It'll be better then
To forget it all
For there is no greater deliverance
Than the one found in silence –
In the blind capsule of ignorance

Remove my eyes!
Erase my brain!

Leave me senseless
Like a placid jellyfish
Clear
With no emotions
Without the vanity to feel
A right to be

*The
Beat
Within*

The Unreasonable Rationality of Poetry

Poetry goes beyond words
Poetry breathes back
Life into the tired lungs
Overwhelmed
By the burdens
Of our heart
A heart who has been
Suffocating
With the preoccupations
Of it's host's demise

*We appreciate all your words and the courage it takes for you
to share all of this with us.*

A Piece of Art

Does it start from the root
Of the seed?

A deeper imagine of growth coming from the heart!
Use your eyes, now picture seeing the passions of an
growing

Heart. Every moment is spent struggling with nature.
In order to succeed but there is only time to grow so no
Need to worry because patience is for Destiny from the
Root of the seed.

A Poet

Beyond the stars
Do I know what's there?
So bright and beautiful.

Darkness is confined yet the feeling is like plumage
Although I can't grasp it.

Could it be one of the most dignities of poets
or dust the soft brush of an blooming rose against the
throat.

To a poet it's to remember the touch

DEON BOWEN

Writing from a Texas State Prison in Iowa Park, Texas, we bring
you a poet among poets. He writes about being a poet, he writes
about being an artist, and he also writes about a piece of art. These
poems are short but definitely worth reading. But don't let us be the
judge of that...

The Art In Pieces

Torn from side to side unable to figure
inside from out but, perhaps in between
there's an optimistic value, then again.....
the pieces are troublly scattered!
mentally and physically bonded to be lost.
It is as far as east is from west never
thinking enough to do it's best. However,
no matter what it's perspective is.....
The pieces can only be apart of the
art viewed by many but, only
meant for the art with in Pieces?

Doesn't Cost A Thing To Smile

To all of you youth doing time or at one of the after-school workshops:

Take one minute to smile and you will feel inside a good feeling. What I want to say is no matter where you are, you can be happy when you just smile. If you are in a group hearing this, then turn to the person sitting next to you and ask them to smile. I call this helping someone become happy for a minute or two.

Being kind to people helps them feel like somebody, and lets you know that you have a special gift that creates joy. I challenge you all to try your special gift for a week (just one week and see what you come up with)

Today when we are on our way to school or to the chow hall, opportunity is at the table while eating or walking. I truly believe we all have the gift of bringing a smile to our neighbors and friends. We just have to use it.

To all our loyal Beat Within readers:

Tell someone something kind today with a smile because that what The Beat Within does to brothers and sisters wherever the magazine goes out. It is such a blessing today. The Beat has a positive crew and The Beat helps me with my issues when I read about people going through what I'm going through. That's why I try to help our youth, so that they don't end up in a prison cell because they are our future for tomorrow. Food for thought: Anything the mind can believe, the mind can achieve. Tell a friend!!

Writing from the CA Rehab Center in Norco, CA, we give you a man on a mission to reach the younger generation. In fact, he's one of the most passionate people we've met when it comes to offering young people words of encouragement. This week is no different as he lights a fire under our butts to give someone else a smile. Even though we often complain about our lives, he says the world is a beautiful place. He's so optimistic that he wants to get his parole transferred to his hometown, East Palo Alto, so he can be involved in his local community upon his release. What a noble and honorable reason to get paroled to a particular place. He offers The Beat Within many props and for that we're thankful. It couldn't be possible without people like you writing us. You truly are an inspiration to us all and we really enjoy hearing from you each time you send your words of encouragement. Thank you for all that you are, and all you're hoping to become.

It's A Wonderful World!

In spite of the fact we complain and lament and view this world with much discontent, we are not the blame, deploring conditions and grumbling because there's so much injustice and so many flaws. It's a wonderful world and its people like you youth who make it that way by the things you do for a warm and ready smile or a kind, thoughtful deed. A hand outstretched in an hour of need can change our whole outlook and make the world bright where a minute before just nothing seemed right. It's a wonderful world for all of you young men and women and it always will be if you keep your eyes open and focused to see the wonderful things that life has to offer. We are capable of wonderful things when we open our heart to God and his love. Tell a friend today. I found part of this power while reading and wanted to share with you youth in juvenile hall and after-school workshops. Keep making your voices heard because we hear lots of cries for help. Pass the word and tell a friend. We're looking for positive peers!!

The Beat has a positive crew and The Beat helps me with my issues when I read about people going through what I'm going through. That's why I try to help our youth. . .

Look For Every Opportunity

Since the time with our young ones is limited
Let's do those things that will be remembered and gifted
Take some action in our life to claim a lost moment, or

Reclaim a new one and be there to show them
Unconditional love is caring — like reading stories,
Going bike riding, or just sharing

The people who are supposed to be in their lives
The most are disappearing

Going to prisons, doing drugs, or simply not hearing
Nothing will make a greater impact in a child's life
Than knowing him

Unconditional love and not just saying it but showing
By expressing love and being more aware of principles
And put the needs of the family first,

Before the individual
Surprises make the greater impact in the shortest
Periods of time

Be honest, true, and never lie to them
Children are our greatest assets and might
And they didn't ask to be here in this life
Let's share their passions and look for every
Opportunity

To look for strengths in their character and
Personality!

CLINTON

In a society where our children are being treated worse and worse as time passes, we lose sight of their innocence. Always wondering what our kids have done wrong, labeling them with certain stereotypes, and refusing to hear what they have to say is usually how we deal with our young adults. Then we prance around saying surface statements like, "The youth are the future." Well, if we don't invest in them now, our futures are looking pretty grim. This next writer not only recognizes that, but also is courageous enough to speak up on it. He writes a poem about prioritizing our lives around raising our children to the best of our abilities, being they're soaking everything up and we want to prepare them for a very crucial world, a very cold reality. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Thank you for reminding everyone how important it is that we stay attentive to the most powerful resources in the world, our young people. We're sure they'll appreciate it as we have... Thanks



My Farewell

I don't know
What any of it means
Nor the meaning of my life
Spent almost totally
Behind prison bars, which now
Is faced with its demise.
Yes. Soon I will be dead.
And yes, I am scared.

Even the roughly educated man can recognize something in what Jung tried to communicate to the world. I'm a lifer in prison. With the exception of a year and a half hitch-hiking back and forth across Canada and the United States, my whole adult life from age sixteen on into the middle of my thirty-fifth year has been spent inside prison walls. And like a crashing echo against these walls I have put myself to the question: "Who am I, really?" What turned me on to Jung was Joseph Campbell's mention of him in the interview now referred to as The Power of Myth, with Bill Moyers, how we are each living the "hero's journey" as we live out life. Years earlier having read Victor Frankl's Man's Search For Meaning and it's impact on me, shaping my very foundation to Jung could easily be synchronistic. My first two years in this prison were excruciating. I saw people die and felt in the cauldron a maddening rage that spread like black poison. The intensity of confinement in virtual isolation will for better or worse transform. In my own mind the verdict is still out, although some argue in my favor.

As for Jung and my dying. Well...it isn't easy to explain. One day I decided to get a tattoo on me of Prometheus chained to the Caucasus Mountains with several vultures feeding on his liver – at the time the prison had experienced its worse riot in a decade and a half – a racial riot between Chicanos and Blacks. People died. The prison had been locked down a couple of months and confined to the cell day in and day out it felt like the right time to have some work done on me. Funny how certain images can have a gripping effect – the tattoo when it was finished was more a work of art: Prometheus chained and screaming out in agony as hideous vultures ripped to shreds his dripping liver.

Since reading of Prometheus and how he stole fire from the gods to preserve man and for his punishment was to suffer the days of eternity as feed for vultures, I think noble suffering is a gift from god. Frankl in the death camps of Europe was put in direct touch with the mystery of meaning. In such madness and suffering, where can the meaning possibly be found? Frankl taught me it was an individual decision – how we approach our existence. In the vernacular of the only life I know, "shit happens." I do try to understand my past life... my childhood or wanting to be locked away in prison. My regret for taking a man's life is beyond the bounds of mere words. I hurt inside from this wound I carry, and the pain I feel is with me throughout my days. The lack of meaning, or the meaninglessness of my life went beyond acceptable lines as did reaction to the hole that was punched through me with one final blow... life was over... it was meaningless and painful, but instead of putting an end to my suffering, I directed it on someone who didn't deserve to die.

These years of confinement have helped me to understand my past. But more important they have allowed me to be able to interpret my present from moment to minute. A couple of months after my image of Prometheus

Introduced and shared with us by our good friend, loyal Beat writer G. Alvarado, who brings to us Pat Nolan, RIP, who revealed a whole lot about himself and had a very good outlook on life, before his tragic death. He's actually so inspiring that G. Alvarado's friendship with him is one of the reasons Mr. Alvarado got started on his own inward journey. He's wrote this from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA. We really enjoyed this heartfelt piece of writing, and hope G. Alvarado will continue to keep sharing his work with us readers. We are very inspired and informed after reading this touching effort, so we know you will be too... RIP Pat Nolan.

was tattooed into my skin I had a blood test done because I didn't "feel right." I felt like at some unconscious level a change was taking place inside me and it left me feeling premonitions that were dark and ominous. Sometime after that I was paged to the medical department not knowing why and was informed I had Hepatitis C, a disease that feeds on the liver. When I was told this I thought for sure death was near at hand--I was sick with terror, wanting to cry out my grief but being unable to. A couple of years have passed since then and the only treatment I've received are blood tests and nutritional supplement drink I was recently told I'll no longer be receiving... "it is too expensive." I thought I managed to come to terms with my health—I told myself "I'd go when it was my time and for as long as I can, I will try to make the most of my life." With this attitude I felt okay...and as I became used to it, death didn't seem so close at hand.

But, once again I could feel something going on inside me. I began pulling back from the people in my life outside this place...family, friends, close friends. It was like I had nothing more to say. Words sounded without meaning. I also felt like my existence was unproductive and the negativity of the environment was a tar pit I tripped into. I felt like I had to get out or I would be smothered. I smothered the man I killed – I caused him to suffer a silenced desperation until his death.

Terror is the emotion I can come up with. It's what I feel as I face my own death. I thought possibly the reason for feeling so much unease was due to the constant barrage of this environment. I needed to move, to be going somewhere and I thought this meant a transfer to another prison. I had been toying with the idea of trying to transfer to the medical facility but each time I entertained the idea I would tell myself I didn't want to leave my celly Marty behind. After five years of sharing the same cell we became closer than actual family members. He had no family and with his mother recently dying my over-protective big brother complex kicked in despite the fact he was a couple years older than me. I "needed" to be going and Marty felt the need to stay.

How true is the unconscious as it was understood by Jung? I look for the sudden trauma that caused my soul wound and an image does come to mind but I tried to confirm it and it was rejected. I settled on an image my little brother Ricky reminded me one night long ago as we lay in the pitch blackness of a friend's basement trying to sleep but instead softly talking as we once did as small boys. He said he wished I'd have killed our stepfather that night he came into our windowless bedroom with a large kitchen knife saying if I wanted him gone I would have to kill him. Instead I cried. And as Ricky brought that memory back we both lay in the darkness crying. What did my stepfather feel as he took back the knife? Was it in that instant that he felt shame at my five or six year-old weakness? I think Ricky pretended to sleep when this happened...I was the oldest and was named after my father: "Terry." All my life that name made me feel weak from shame. It sounded like

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a girl's name. I hated it. When my stepfather died. I was in a Toronto city jail and when I was released I changed. I took on my middle name: Patrick.

I feel so lost and alone. I was called again to the doctor and was informed my blood levels were at "critical." This swollen spleen that is twice the size of my liver may soon have to be removed. My liver is shot and I have a blood disease called I.T.P. He called it a phenomenon – for the past two years I am told a simple liver biopsy isn't a good idea because I may bleed to death and now I am faced with a decision of consenting surgery far more complicated than a biopsy. How much of what I have experienced in my life is synchronistic and how much mere chance? Was my body on some unconscious level bringing me to an awareness of these facts – whether I like it or not is it time to move on and for the remainder of this journey I must walk alone? To say I grieve doesn't touch what I am feeling, nor will it have any influence in changing the fact that I must move on whether or not I want to.

I wish I could be so brave to embrace the lines of Dogen's brief but infinite poem "Coming or Going:"

The migrating bird
Leaves no trace behind
and does not need a guide

I don't want to be obliterated by the exhalation of my final breath. Like Thoreau I want to "notch the stick of time." But am I so deserving? With undisciplined exertions I have attempted to nurture some meaning of my life and for the most part my efforts have felt futile at best. But I did try. And like the pebble and the pond I will never know what effect upon the world I had. How can such a tiny piece of immortality be the cause of such pain? Besides, even if I did manage to make a major change in life I am doubtful that would even satisfy me!

The "heroic journey." I try to see it of my life and it really is difficult --- if it is the process of individualization, well then I qualify, but it is a drive I often fool myself to believing I am in control of. But in truth, I am shaped by forces both internal and external. To reach a level of awareness requires of one to confront personal truths subjective and objective, and with that awareness comes the responsibility to honor that awareness. I keep telling myself I am over-reacting, that if I have to have surgery I will come out of it all right. But is this what I really want? I would rather die a painless death on an operating table than the excruciatingly slow agony of a liver eating disease. Do I have the strength to let go of my desperate hold to this world, to my life in it? Prometheus found healing in the nights that followed the day, but what will I find in the night of my final eclipse?

In Mass today the deacon, my friend, asked if I would be willing to have a healing anointment done by a visiting bishop this coming Thursday. I told him I would if it could be done alone. He said I should include Marty, that he needs it as much for my sake as his own. I refused to show any emotion when Marty sang my favorite song he had written: Star-Maker. I didn't want to reveal my vulnerability. I would rather put up a wall than reveal my frailty of spirit. Am I wrong to deny the people who love me to share in my grief? Shouldn't I rather invite all those who care for me to share in this healing ceremony? A part of me says it is through the wound we find healing so is it possible for someone to find it in my wound? I will invite all the men who are part of the Men's Support Groups to be there, as well as the guys I know off the yard. I will definitely squirm from the

discomfort of the experience and maybe for this alone I should do it – because it does make me squirm.

I mentioned an image I was unable to confirm that may have happened to me as a child. I asked my grandmother once if my "real" father had ever hurt me enough to put me in the hospital. She sounded angry that I could even ask such a question. Her response was, "no, he loved me." I remember thinking that my father once ate my baby food because he was hungry. I forget who told me this, but it has always stuck. I am not sure why I even feel he had hurt me but I remember seeing myself as four or five years old in St. Michael's Hospital. I was on a three- wheeler bicycle in the hallway and someone picked me up and carried me into an operating room. I remember laying on a padded doctor's table with an anesthesia mask on my face, and then I was looking at myself from above as I lay on the table and it looked like I had grown a lot of pubic hair. I could never make sense of that memory but always felt it was real. I thought it might be a memory of my circumcision but that happens shortly after one is born usually.

Another memory or image I have is a bedroom I shared with my brother Ricky and sister Lori. Ricky and I shared a bunk-bed. I used to have dreams that I remember always ended with me falling from the top bunk onto the floor. I seemed to drift slowly downward. It was Christmas time and a delivery- man had dropped a large box off in the hallway that separated our bedroom with a family who lived opposite. I remember dragging the box in the early morning hours and with my brother and sister opening it up. It was filled with presents: toys, clothing. I can still feel the joy and excitement the three of us felt as we emptied the box of its contents. I also remember my father coming in later. That particular memory has always remained obscure to me, but I do remember once holding this memory up to the light, slowly feeling around it and as I did another image surfaced, the one I will never be able to confirm. In it I am in the same room I shared with my brother and sister, but I am sitting on my dad's lap with my pants pulled down and my legs in the vice grip of his legs and he isn't beating my ass but is holding a pillow over my face as he drags his teeth over and over the length of my tiny penis. I always felt this was the real cause for my being in the hospital and possibly the reason my father left us when he did.

If this really did happen to me what sort of effect could it possibly have upon me later in life? I always thought to make my life an example – let people look and learn. There are so many in prison and out who struggle with the same sort of wounds that I struggle with – men who are youngsters filled with the same painful intensities that cooked me. Jung saw this at the deepest level, and Campbell pointed it out in the myriad of cross-cultural mythologies that have colored the various ages of our world. I have wanted to be a guide and friend to the younger men of this environment, to be available if they ever wanted to share their personal stories. I could have done a better job I think if I weren't so caught up in my own. But isn't that how it always goes? And now I stand facing a path I must travel alone and I am scared to say goodbye, terrified to openly cry.

Marty says I should write my memoirs. I'm a published poet and shouldn't have any trouble doing that, but the truth is I don't know what to say. I am grateful for the life I have lived so far, and I can only hope that the little I contributed to life will bring some margin of balance to the toll I owe in taking life. I am sorry Bill, and if I did any good in this world, please let it go to you.

In The Savannah

A black lion,
Much nobler
Than a panther
With his thick
Mane turning gray,
Languishes in the cool
Shade of a canopied
Tree, ferocious to the eye
Of would-be lion kings.

In this Savannah,
This lion king's
Domain, a distant
Danger draws inward,
Great beasts become
Extinct, caught in a noose
Of constricting horizons.

He knows, too,
The time is near –
When his throne
Will be over-thrown
By those less noble,
Without respect.

A time will come
When the kingdom becomes
A desolate terrain filled
With jackals and vultures.

Untitled

No longer
Do we refer
To our teachers
As father – brothers
Are now foes to be wary of, and warred upon.

The simple symbolic
References
Have become dulled
In the reverence
They once contained.
I hang my head
In sorrow, in shame,
And silently grieve:
I want to cry,
To wail my misery
And aloneness to the wind
But no one ever taught me

My pain, my pain,
Ah, the pain
And the Great Spirit
Now dust on a road
No longer traveled.

I want to pray
But don't know how, nor can
I sing without songs to praise –
Having fallen from the road into a grave
With all the teachers
I die

How Often Do We Speak

How often do we speak
Days pile, become dusty
Mounds, lost burial sites
To memories, swept clean
By hot winds, become baked
Sand, parched crusty flakes,
Yet here I am, a jaded
Nomad to a caravan
Of guilt, grief and shame.

How often do we speak
Now that the days have waned
To dusk, and the few flowers
Have withered,
How often do we speak

In The City

The blind man sings,
Swinging his can filled
With pencils.
He sings, people pass,
I stand to one side
And watch the scene.

Opposite the blind man,
A man in red sweater ablaze
With buttons that quote biblical sayings
Swears from his platform of mild-crates
That judgment day is on hand: "Sinners
Be damned!"

I watch this display at a crossroads
In my life – 19 – waiting for some sign
Of destiny, or something, anyway.

At one corner
Across from where
The prophet screams his spittled flames,
A woman is pressed into the crevice
Of two buildings, wrapped in multi-
Colored scarves – she doesn't move,
She doesn't speak – just sits there
Day after day, wooly and obscure to the traffic
Passing by.

This is culture in poverty,
A diversity of misery scoffed at, and ofttimes
Swept under the cracks.

The blind man walks away, eventually
A couple quarters richer. The prophet
Caught up in his zeal marches on the local
Scientology Center.

The woman remains where she is
Until someone finally notices she is dead – me.
I found destiny to be overrated and am now serving
Life in prison.

I Stay Strong

Waking-up in the morning, on my way once again to eat,
I have to be focused with tightly tied shoes on my feet.
I'm entitled to a few minutes in the chow hall,
to look up to the sound of a C/O (Correctional Officer) on
his call.

On my way back to my cell to start another day,
I didn't even get a chance to glimpse if it were sunny or
gray.

The noise of keys are coming down the fifty-cell tier.
They all look alike, but numbered the cell door locks I
hear.

There's only so much room and two men have just arrived.
I'm so grateful, but maybe my cellie does not want to be
alive.

I'll be convenient (courtesy), with all dues of respect,
and when I'm done, I do what I do everyday that's next.

You read my poem and that's what goes on...
Well, the cellie's smoking, wick burning, farting, etc...
I stay strong.

The pen could be a hard place to find cellmates that are
good.

I think about moving and he probably wishes I would!
So, it goes both ways and to each his own.

I get out in a couple of days, not even a home in the city
to possibly sell some rocks,
knowing the police stay focused watching the block,
so the day goes on in my cell.

It could be a living hell,
the noise outside of those on stress.

I have to cleanup even my cellie's mess.
You could tell 'em over and over once again and they won't
even talk.

You go to the store and now they've become a friend.
Eat you out of house and home the best he can.

I even got one who eats out of the garbage can.

Should I worry about a cold or possibly a disease?
The man doesn't even cover his mouth, but he continues
to sneeze.

His T-B check possible came out with effect.

I think I better ask in order to check.

He uses your toothbrush because yours is new.

You're bound to catch something.

Hopefully, the flu.

The medical comes by and asks you if you want some
care.

You'll be lucky if they stop, let alone stare, and if you get
any play, you'll get a slip
to fill-out for sick call,

but you don't get no answer until two weeks later, and
trip, all for two aspirins
that cost \$5.00,
by then, you're not sick.

This is my 20th or more time being in here.

It's a quick revolving door, in and out of these jail cells,
and yes, it could be heaven, let alone hell.

You're being called-out by so many names and the politics
are always full of games.

I keep my mind focused all through the day.

I watch who I hang around, let alone say some things
here, I'm better off not saying anything at all.

You could get into some drama that may lead to your
death.

It's morning now, but for only a few seconds in the day.

I'll possibly play chess or cards with my cellie.

I know one thing: if you get excited when you win, then

First time poet, Jimmy Ortiz writes us this lengthy poem about his life in a cell. He definitely took some time in creating this piece, that is definitely felt. We do wish we could have read it better, but we think for the most part you readers will get where Jimmy is coming from, as he shares his years and years experience. Jimmy Ortiz wrote this poem from San Quentin State Prison. We're not sure where he is today, but maybe this piece/issue will find him.

you'll probably get upset when you're luck goes down.
This place is a school for me to learn about myself and to
think about my cellie's problems. I got mine's on my shelf.

He gets mad and gets way out of control,
physically violent, but I stay on swoll (strong).
Maybe not physically, but mentally I'm composed
because if I lose it, there will be blood all over.

His or mines, but we will both lose out.
I've lost so much blood in the past, it's considered a
drought.

My routines are a not in days of time
because the CO's can't stop moving us,
a cell to find.

The problem is good and mostly it's not in the morning,
afternoon, and nighttime.

I forgot that this is just a bit that happened today in CDC.
In fact, it's happening at this moment right now to me.

I've been doing time in CDC for sixteen years,
one more for a tattoo on my eye of a tear,
a tear for each life taken,

or a tear for each year you crooked.
I'll stay focused and read my book.

The Bible is the best way for me
while I'm locked-up in CDC.

It doesn't pass time, but it plants a seed.

It gives me so much, I can't explain the need.

It's hard to see mail go by and my named not called.

And I think I heard my name called down the hall

I'm in this cell no mail, I'm going crazy.

I thought I was tough and the wall wouldn't fade me.

Well, what I've learned is what I say now.

I've been clean for a year

Yes, it's really important, deep in the mind,
because some CO's and cellies a body they find.

My history in a cell has been my life,
strife without no wife,
but only I suffer the loneliness.

I write letters of signals of distress.

I get no respond back. The day has come to an end.

I wonder what tomorrow may bring. My thoughts begin.

I wake-up and I thank God for a day of life.

I thank Him for my family, my dad, and his wife.

I'm thank the water that runs to wash my face,

because in some countries there's not a drop in the place.

I got all that I will need to provide myself for today
and I'm a man with integrity and know what to say.

I help other brothers in misery, in times of need,
and I give if I have, I cannot hold greed.

I remain happy in a place so sad,

and if my cell gets shook down, I remain glad.

I'm not going to let me break my own stride.

I keep a smile ever so wide.

People are going to miss me in a few days.

I hope to God I don't come back.

My hair's turning gray.

It's all up to me when I get out,

I realize it's not on the block but church got the clout
And to stay focused positively, and I'll schedule daily to
maintain.

I remember this, don't hit the 'caine.

Se Llama Angel

Cuenta una antigua leyenda que un niño estaba por nacer...y le dijo un día a dios:

"Me dicen quen que me vas a enviar mañana a la tierra pero como vivere tan pequeno y indefenso como soy?" Dios le repondio:

"Entre muchos angeles escogia a uno para ti y te esta esperando...tu angel te cuidara"

"Pero dime, aqui en el cielo no hago mas que cantar y sonreir y eso me basta para ser feliz."

"Tu angel te cantara y sonreira todos los dias sentiras su amor y seras feliz."

"Y como voy a entender cuando la gente me hable , si ni conozco el extraño idioma que hablan los hombres."

"Tu angel te dira las palabras mas dulces y tiernas que puedas escuchar. Con mucho carino y paciencia te enseñara a hablar."

" Y que hare cuando quiera hablar contigo?"

"Tu angel te juntara las manitas y te enseñara a orar."

"E ollido que en la tierra hay hombres malos y quien me defendera?"

Tu angel te defendera y costo de so propia vida."

"Pero estare triste porque no te vere mas..."

"Tu angel te hablara siempre de mi y te enseñare el camino para que regreses a mi precencia aunque yo estare siempre a tu lado."

En ese instante una gran paz reinaba en el cielo pero ya se ollan voces terestres y el niño presuroso repetia suavemente...dios mio, ya me voy dime su nombre, como se llamami angel? A lo que dios contesto: "Su nombre no importa, tu solo le diras.

-Mama

The Name Is Angel

Not too long ago there was legend in the making, a boy about to be born. He asked God:

"I was told that you were gonna put me on earth tomorrow but how would I survive if I'm gonna be so small and helpless?" And God responded

"Among all the angels I have chosen one for you he's already waiting. Your angel will take care of you."

"But tell me, right here in heaven all I do is sing and laugh that means I'mma stop being happy."

"Your angel will sing to you and you will smile everyday and feel loved and be happy."

"How would I understand the language that the people will speak to me, I'm not gonna recognize the language that people talk."

"Your angel will speak the sweetest words so you will understand. And with love and patience your angel will show you how to talk."

"What am I gonna do when I wanna talk to you?"

"Your angel will put your hands together and show you how to pray."

"I heard that on the Earth there are bad people so who would defend me?"

"Your angel will defend you with its life."

"But I will be sad because I am not gonna get to see you anymore."

"Your angel will always tell you about me and show you the way so you would return to my presence. I will always be by your side.

Instantly there was nothing but heavenly peace and all you can hear was alienated voices fast, soft and repeatedly....

" God here I go, tell me his name, what's my angel's name? And God responded

"The name doesn't matter you will find out.

-Mama

These next poems are a sad collection because the writer begins with a poem about his angel — mama, but then he goes on to speak about how being on the block has plagued him. How he sees death on the block and yet still can't seem to stay away. We're sure many young people are going through this right now as we speak. Afraid to walk to the corner store, or even to the next block because they might get seen by someone who wants to hurt them. And not only that, but in order to feel safe, we must carry guns to the next block. It's a crazy way to feel safe, but it's the harsh reality of the streets. He's writing from a California State Prison in San Diego, CA.

Atrapado

En el barrio no hay salida y yo estoy tan atrapado
Que a diosito le ruego por un grand milagro.

Mi pobre gefita siempre tuvo la razon
Cuando me aviso que las drogas y el barrio me quebrara el corazon

Ahora quiero corer pero nunca volver
Que si me quedo aqui todo lo puedo perder

No se que paso antes no era aci

Por culpa del barrio esperanza perdi

Diosito mio rescata me no me tires a la lumbre

Y por favor ya no digues que las calles me tumben

Como me gustaria regresar a esos tiempos

Cuando las estrellas brillaban y del barrio no era miembro.

Trapped

In the hood there is no way out I am trapped

I beg to God for a big miracle

My poor mom was always right

When she told me that the hood and the drugs would break my heart

Now I wanna run away and not come back

Cause if I were to stay I would lose everything

I don't know what happened it wasn't like this before

Because of the hood I lost hope

Please God save me don't leave me out in the dry

And please don't tell me that the streets are gonna ruin me

How I would like to go back to those times

When the stars use to shine bright and I wasn't from the hood.

Miro Muerte En La Esquina De Mi Barrio

En esta calle yo me escondo con mis perrillos
No por el miedo pero por la trucha del peligro

Si voy a la tienda no estoy seguro si vuelvo vivo
por la razon que aqui hay guerra y te tienes que cuidar del enemigo

Para poder sobre vivir tengo que cagarme una arma
Por que aqui se rodea la muerte listo para quitarte tu alma

No vale la pena ir a la siguiente cuadra
Por que si voy y me resvalo mis rivales con gusto me disparan

Mis amigos y yo vivimos con vidas prestadas
Por la razon que no conocemos la paz y aqui no hay quebradas

Tengo cellos de mis carnalitos porque caminan con mucha suerte
Pero yo ni a la esquina puedo ir porque ayi si me espera la muerte.

I See Death On the Corner Of My Hood

On this block I hide out with my dawgs
Not cause I'm scared buy I need to watch out for danger

If I go to the store I'm not sure I will come back alive
For the fact that we are at war and we gotta watch out for our enemies

I have to pack a strap in order to survive
Because death is lurking round here ready to take your soul

It's not worth going to the next block
Cause if I go I would be slipping and my enemies would gladly start shooting at me

My homies and I are living on borrowed lives
Cause we don't know anything about peace there are no breaks out here

I am jealous of my homies because they walk around with good luck
But I can't even go to the corner because death is waiting for me there.

Hello Beat

Hello, how are you doing? I am better. I just seen my page in The Beat issue. I have more poems for you too. This is what I do most in Salem County Jail. I just write. In here it is boring so you make it fun. Thank you for that. Here are more poems. If you want more let me know! Thanks.

You're My First, My Last, And My Everything

Your love, support, and comfort
these are the things you make me feel.
You give me so much more than I often
ask for: your prayers, your gifts always
make me feel special. To give your love
always to someone else is something,
that I just couldn't do. You're my first,
you're my last, you're my everything.
Our lives together are inseparable
and to be apart from each other
is something we cannot bear. You shower
me with love, you shower me with
comfort. These are the things
that make our foundation strong,
so I say to my wife to be.
You will always be
my first, my last, my everything!

Love Good Enough

Is my love good enough for you
I often wonder is my love good
Enough for you
I thought I would always be the one
Who you loved, but I was dead wrong
And to have that pain shooting through
My stomach hurts bad
As hell to know that
Your love belongs to someone else.

Day in and day out, I cry with
Pain, sorrow, knowing
The things that you are doing
Is killing me slowly, day by day.

To hear your name talked
About in bad ways
Makes me feel sad.
Inside that, I want to cry.

So, what do I do,
Do I act like it doesn't bother me
Or do I deal with it
The best way I know how without
Making any mistake is why
I say is my love good enough for you.

I will never understand
why I feel the way that I do.
Maybe it's more than what I can deal
With, or I have to
I realized that every person isn't like you
I think that they should be
Is my love good enough for you.

No stranger to The Beat poet Steve Nitowski, who writes from Salem County Correctional Facility in Woodstown New Jersey, drops us five sentimental love poems from his East Coast cell. We are extremely honored by his commitment to us readers. We are so glad that The Beat reaches Steve and many other readers/writers on the other coast. We're sure Steve will be back with even more heartfelt poems for us to chew on.

Streets

As I walked the streets a lost soul,
Wondering where my next meal or hot cot would
Come from as I walk and wonder where the next
Things would come from
Suddenly, I saw a golden gate
And loved ones I haven't seen in years
Welcoming me through the gates with open arms.
I am no longer a lost soul
I have been transformed and sins washed way
Temptation and trials still come my way, but we all
Know the Lord will only put on us
No more than we can bear.

Roses Are Red, Violets Are Blue

Roses are red, violets are blue
A compassionate lover is how I think of you
Love, lust, and pure adoration
Is how you rate for my admiration.
You are complete and wholesome
In every way imaginable.
I couldn't dream of a day pass
Without dreaming fondly of you, Bridgette Kelly.
So, yes roses are red, as red as
The lust I feel in my foundation
When I conjure up my physical imagination
And it is true that violets are blue
Only reality, if I had to
Suffer the loss of you,
So I seek refuge in your heart
For safety, security, and faith
With an unshakable stability
For these are the true colors of
Roses and violets and what they are
Defined to mean is not that complex.

Queen

Is she the one who I wait for
Could she be the queen for me
The one who loves me, respects me
And honors me, but most of all,
She is the queen for me.

See, when I say she is the queen
For me, it is the way she walks,
The way she talks,
And most of all, when she enters a room
All eyes are on the queen.

What makes her the queen is
The remarkable things she has allowed me to see
Standing by my side
Being the backbone
Of the family, these are the things
That makes my wifey
The queen for me.

The Forgotten

Almost dawn again—
 ephemeral, surreal, agitated gray
 coming soon, revealing dust everywhere
 and on the bottle.
 Pounding headache, remnants of another
 magical manic night.
 Expectations fading, the street sweeper
 pushes aside the brothel erotica.
 Her morning always starts stained
 cigarette burned sheets.
 Anticipating butts in the ashtray
 moving to med line, she regards
 a menthol in the corner outside her cell.
 The match burns.
 First smoke fills her head as bare feet
 shuffle half naked to the street.
 Scraping the grime out from under her
 fingernails — Someone grabs her arm to usher
 her through the meal line.
 Eyes water, as an angel sits down to eat in
 the company of the forgotten.

This next person is an incredible poet who we haven't heard from before. He sends us a letter asking us to send him a publication because he wanted to view it first before submitting anything, then he wrote a little note at the bottom that said, "I changed my mind, here are three poems for your consideration." We're glad he did that because the best way to receive a Beat is to give us some writing we can put in it. Well, anyhow, he's one of those poets who can paint vivid images in your mind with his words. But you have to read to believe. He's writing from the R J Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA.



Things To Behold

Winds oft' blow in strange
 ways.
 I suppose that's why I choose
 to face them every day.
 The awkward first,
 painful last,
 and the eddies.
 Thoughts more like the wind
 than a carnal dance.
 I knew nothing
 yet knowing not
 for only a time.
 Else bending like the
 Evergreen.
 And the wind, thoughts, and her
 immutable
 things to behold.

Father

What to do
 With invisible hands?
 Did they not hold
 Your son at birth?
 Did they not toil in
 the fields?
 Did they not play catch
 in the great halls?
 Did they ever think to
 touch her cheek the
 women you knew and
 loved but just missed
 by an eternity?
 What to do with Invisible
 hands?
 Did they ever touch
 anything more tangible
 than a soul.

TURO

Trapped

I'm trapped in the system
 I don't know what to do
 I've got to stay focused
 Not act like a fool!

They like to play games
 And pick at your brain
 If you don't stay solid
 They'll drive you insane

Their mission is to break you
 And play with your mind!
 Telling you your effed
 And you're getting more time

Feeling isolated is one thing. You know, not being able to go where you want when you want, but feeling trapped seems to be more painful. Isolation feels more like we brought it on ourselves while feeling trapped feels more like it was brought upon us. This next writer, who's writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, gives us his take on what it feels like to be trapped. And it sounds like a lot of it has to do with the staff that work in prison. It's mostly a piece that speaks of the ills of humans running a "correctional" system, when all humans make mistakes — even the "correctors." However, he does offer hope with his last stanza, "But it's simply a tactic of breaking one down. So stay strong my brothas turn over that frown!" A beautiful way to close, so we're going to leave it at that.

But it is simply a tactic
 Of breaking one down
 So stay strong my brothas
 Turn over that frown!

Dear The Beat Within

I would like to comment on The Beat Within volume 11.19, and all I have to say is "Wow." I can relate to the trials, and tribulation of those youths.

For I myself was a trouble youth that didn't learn a great lesson then. Now I'm a 35-year old man sitting in the pen.

I appreciate the work that The Beat Within is doing and I must say that I was inspired by the artistic writing of the many youths who has step up to the plate to make that positive change in their lives. The many feedbacks The Beat Within to the youths on their poems was inspirational to me as well. I have never wrote a poem in my life but after reading The Beat Within I was inspired to do so, so I wrote.

It's always a pleasure to hear about someone getting inspired to write by reading The Beat Within. It's actually relieving because this work (typing, editing, responding, and publishing a weekly 60+ page publication) is so relentless and a lot of people don't appreciate what we do, so when someone gets inspired by our work, we're truly motivated to keep pushing. He wrote his first poem and although it's short, it's pretty good for a first poem. We would actually like to hear more. He's writing from Greensville Correctional Center in Tarratt, Virginia.

Stand Tall

Trap between these four walls
 That's trying to make me small,
 But all in all I'm going to stand tall.
 And give it my all to defeat these walls.

I hear a conscious call
 Making me aware of the beast around these walls,
 So I refuse to fall.

*Paid dues for the hood, stayed
 true to the game,
 'Cause the homies promised me
 love, power, money, and fame*

TERRY BUCHANON

It's very difficult to keep a relationship while incarcerated with someone on the outside because while time seems to stop when we get locked up, time definitely keeps moving for us outside. While we plague ourselves with memories of the past and hopes for the future, our significant others are out there living in the present, creating new memories and developing new hopes. This next writer is obviously heart broken and though it's sad, we know that he'll get through because really he has to. He's writing from the Ventress Correctional Facility in Clayton, Alabama.

PELON

There wasn't an envelope or a return address with this very powerful poem, so we don't know where he's writing from, but we read the piece and it's incredible - so we bring it to you readers! Not just because he wishes to "turn back the hands of time, when a gang affiliation was not a part of my life," but also because he speaks of his gang involvement with eloquent honesty. The pain he goes through is tremendous and he lets that be known in a poem reflecting wisdom and insight.

Ghetto Pain

My life, my ways, and the struggles I face
 I often pray to drift away

I'm stuck in a bad dream from everything I've seen
 Although I'm young I'm a slave to the prison scene

Lost hope for what tomorrow might bring
 For the fact that I'm living the gangster dream

Paid dues for the hood, stayed true to the game,
 'Cause the homies promised me love, power, money, and
 fame

Reality was all they gave me was pain
 By putting corruption inside of my brain

At times I feel as if I'm taking my last breath,
 because sooner or later my future is death

And if I slip to the fact where I had to die...
 I often wonder who would cry

Oh how I wish I could turn back the hands of time...
 When a gang affiliation was not a part of my life.

Lost Thought

I never thought that it would end like this.
 We didn't get to share a hug nor a simple kiss.
 Just the night before, we cried together.
 Right now I'm really wishing we had died together.
 It just had to be you that I gave my heart to,
 And in return I received the same from you.
 The memories I have can't be erased.
 The love we shared won't be replaced.
 Ja' Quana, I just want you to know that I miss you.
 I know it's going to take some time,
 But right now, I'm dying inside.
 Baby, I LOVE YOU.
 (She's still alive but I'm dead to her)



I was paged to the medical department not knowing why and was informed I had Hepatitis C, a disease that feeds on the liver. When I was told this I thought for sure death was near at hand — I was sick with terror, wanting to cry out my grief but being unable to.

read the rest of Pat Nolan's BWO piece on page 52

